



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, left, and US Secretary of State John Kerry stand together before a meeting at Winfield House in London, Friday March 14, 2014. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry flew to London on Friday to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in a last-minute bid to stave off a new chapter in the East-West crisis over Ukraine.

(AP Photo/Brendan Smialowski, Pool)

On Ukraine, Russia and West Not on Same Page

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WASHINGTON/LONDON - An 11th-hour bid by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to ease the escalating crisis over the Kremlin's intervention in Crimea ended inconclusively Friday, with his Russian counter-

part, Sergey V. Lavrov, declaring that Russia and the West have "no common vision" about the events that led to the impasse. In a more positive vein, Lavrov also said that Russia "does not have any plans to invade Eastern or South-

ern Ukraine," despite the buildup of Russian forces in regions along the Ukrainian border that has raised fears in Ukraine and beyond that an invasion could be imminent. Lavrov held firm to Russia's positions throughout the crisis: denouncing the ouster of Viktor Yanukovich as a coup, refusing to recognize the new government, opposing the creation of a "contact group" and reiterating Crimea's right to self-determination. "We don't have a common vision of the situa-

tion," Lavrov said during his appearance after the talks, which he nonetheless called helpful in clarifying the seemingly intractable positions. "Our differences remain."

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Missing plane: Piracy theory gains more credence

**EILEEN NG
JOAN LOWY**

Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia

(AP) — Piracy and pilot suicide are among the scenarios under study as investigators grow increasingly certain the missing Malaysian Airlines jet changed course and headed west after its last radio contact with air traffic controllers. The latest evidence suggests the plane didn't experience a catastrophic incident over the South China Sea as was initially suspected. Some experts theorize that one of the pilots, or someone else with flying experience, hijacked the plane or committed suicide by plunging the jet into the sea.

Adding to the speculation that someone was flying the jet, The New York Times on Friday quoted sources familiar with the investigation as saying that the plane experienced significant changes in altitude after it lost contact with ground control, and altered its course more than once.

A U.S. official told The Associated Press earlier that investigators are examining the possibility of "human intervention" in the plane's disappearance, adding it may have been "an act of piracy." The official, who wasn't authorized to talk to the media and spoke on condition of anonymity, said it also was possible the plane may have landed somewhere.

The official later said there was no solid information on who might have been involved.

While other theories are still being examined, the official said key evidence suggesting human intervention is that contact with the Boeing 777's transponder stopped about a dozen minutes before a messaging system on the jet quit. Such a gap would be unlikely in the case of an in-flight catastrophe.

A Malaysian official, who also declined to be identified because he is not authorized to brief the media, said only a skilled aviator

could navigate the plane the way it was flown after its last confirmed location over the South China Sea. The official said it had been established with a "more than 50 percent" degree of certainty that military radar had picked up the missing plane after it dropped off civilian radar.

Malaysia's acting transport minister, Hishammuddin Hussein, said the country had yet to determine what

continue expanding east and west from the plane's last confirmed location.

Though some investigators are now convinced that "human intervention" caused the disappearance, U.S. officials told the White House at a briefing Friday that they have "run all the traps" and come up with no good information on who might be involved, according to an official familiar with the meeting. The meeting was

act.

The data consists of attempts by an Inmarsat satellite to identify a broad area where the plane might be in case a messaging system aboard the plane should need to connect with the satellite, said the official. The official compared the location attempts, called a "handshake," to someone driving around with their cellphone not in use. As the phone from passes from the range

to show the airliner climbing to 45,000 feet (about 13,700 meters), higher than a Boeing 777's approved limit, soon after it disappeared from civilian radar, and making a sharp turn to the west. The radar track then shows the plane descending unevenly to an altitude of 23,000 feet (7,000 meters), below normal cruising levels, before rising again and flying northwest over the Strait of Malacca toward the Indian Ocean, the Times reported.

Scores of aircraft and ships from 12 countries are involved in the search, which reaches into the eastern stretches of the South China Sea and on the western side of the Malay Peninsula, northwest into the Andaman Sea and the Indian Ocean.

India said it was using heat sensors on flights over hundreds of Andaman Sea islands Friday and would expand the search for the missing jet farther west into the Bay of Bengal, more than 1,600 kilometers (about 1,000 miles) to the west of the plane's last known position.

A team of five U.S. officials with air traffic control and radar expertise — three from the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board and two from the Federal Aviation Administration — has been in Kuala Lumpur since Monday to assist with the investigation.

White House spokesman Jay Carney sidestepped questions Friday about the possibility of human intervention in the plane disappearance, saying only that U.S. officials were assisting in the investigation.

"I don't have conclusive answers and I don't think anyone does," Carney said.

Malaysia has faced accusations it isn't sharing all its information or suspicions about the plane's final movements. It insists it is being open, and says it would be irresponsible to narrow the focus of the search until there is undeniable evidence of the plane's flight path. □



Indonesian Air Force personnel of the 5th Air Squadron "Black Mermaids" listen to a briefing as an operation map is projected on the wall following a search mission for the missing Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 that was conducted over the Strait of Malacca, at Suwondo air base in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, Friday, March 14, 2014. The jetliner vanished nearly a week ago with 239 people aboard.

(AP Photo/Binsar Bakkara)

happened to the plane after it ceased communicating with ground control around 40 minutes into the flight to Beijing on March 8 with 239 people aboard.

He said investigators were still trying to establish that military radar records of a blip moving west across the Malay Peninsula into the Strait of Malacca showed Flight MH370.

"I will be the most happiest person if we can actually confirm that it is the MH370, then we can move all (search) assets from the South China Sea to the Strait of Malacca," he told reporters. Until then, he said, the international search effort would con-

attended by State and Defense Department officials, the CIA, the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board, among others.

"I don't think there is any consensus on a theory," the official said. "They're not hearing anything in their surveillance that would indicate that this is part of a plot."

Another U.S. official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said investigators looking for the plane have run out of clues except for a type of satellite data that has never been used before to find a missing plane, and is very inex-

of one cellphone tower to another, the towers note that the phone is in range in case messages needed to be sent.

In the case of the Malaysian plane, there were successful attempts by the satellite to roughly locate the Boeing 777 about once an hour over four to five hours, the official said. "This is all brand new to us," the official said. "We've never had to use satellite handshaking as the best possible source of information." The New York Times, quoting American officials and others familiar with the investigation, said radar signals recorded by the Malaysian military appear

2 convicted in ghoulish NYC kidnap-rape-killing plot case

BY JENNIFER PELTZ
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A retired New York high school librarian and a New Jersey auto mechanic were convicted Friday of scheming to carry out gruesome fantasies of kidnapping, raping, torturing and killing women and girls.

The verdicts in Christopher Asch and Michael Van Hise's conspiracy trial came a year after a conviction in a headline-grabbing case of a police officer accused of plotting abductions and cannibalism. A fourth man, a former hospital police chief, pleaded guilty in January.

Together, the cases plumbed an online underground where people share macabre fetishes, and the prosecutions hinged on the boundaries between imagining and actually intending to bring fantasies to life.

Lawyers for both said they would appeal. No sentencing date was set.

"Today, a unanimous jury found that the twisted conspiracies of Michael Van Hise and Robert Christopher Asch were not mere fantasy, but steps within very real plans to kidnap real victims," Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said in a statement, using Asch's full name; he goes by Christopher.

But defense lawyers said the men's alleged plans were no more real than the plots of horror movies or violent pornography.

"We knew, from the outset, that it was going to be difficult to overcome the graphic nature of this case, even though we thought it was pure fantasy," said Asch's attorney, Brian Waller.

Asch and Van Hise showed little reaction as jurors delivered a verdict that could put them in prison for life. But Waller called Asch "crushed," and one of Van Hise's attorneys, Alice Fontier, said he seemed shocked.

Asch, a former librarian at Manhattan's prestigious Stuyvesant High School, and Van Hise, a mechanic, were accused of planning to victimize members of Van Hise's family, including girls under 10. Asch also was convicted of targeting another woman, who turned out to be an undercover FBI agent.

Prosecutors said Van Hise and Asch took concrete steps across the line between pretending and plotting. They met once in Trenton and drove around talking about places to dispose of bodies, Asch searched online for tips on knockout drugs to overpower potential victims, and Van Hise emailed Asch pictures of his possible-target relatives — who included his wife, stepdaughter, sister-in-law and nieces, prosecutors noted. In the other alleged plot, Asch covertly watched the undercover agent and amassed a stock of torture tools, including a 20-million-volt stun gun, a whip, clamps, skewers and gynecological implements, according to evidence at the trial.

"None of this was fake," Assistant U.S. Attorney Hadasa Waxman said in a closing argument. "They were absolutely serious."

Defense lawyers said Asch, 24, and Van Hise, 61, were only role-playing and would never have actually hurt anyone. Van Hise's supposed schemes were riddled with impossibilities, like kidnapping his sister-in-law from work when she didn't have a job, and he was so far from acting on his desires that he told his wife about them, Fontier said.

She suggested jurors "voted out of fear" of what might have been if the men were serious.

Asch's lawyer said his client's discussions and preparations didn't amount to truly planning to do anything violent. □

Russia and West not on same page

Continued from front

Lavrov refused to say whether Russia would move to recognize Crimea as an independent state or to absorb it as a region of the Russian Federation. Instead, he repeated President Vladimir Putin's pledge to "respect the choice" of voters in a referendum on secession on Sunday, after which Russia would announce its next steps. "It makes no sense to speculate at this point,"

with the U.N. secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, on Friday, the Kremlin said in a statement, and emphasized that the decision to hold the referendum on Crimea's status "fully complies with international law and the U.N. Charter." Western nations have called the referendum illegal.

Ban did not say anything specific about the referendum, he said, but he warned of "a great risk of a dangerous downward

dered a snap exercise involving thousands of troops near Ukraine's borders this week.

Even as Russia announced additional military exercises, including flights by fighter jets in the Mediterranean, the Foreign Ministry in Moscow blamed the new authorities in Kiev for losing control of the country and reiterated Putin's vow to defend Russian "compatriots" in Ukraine.

The ministry's statement, released on its website,



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry speaks to the media during a press conference in London after his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Friday, March 14, 2014. Kerry arrived in London Friday, for his last meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov before the Crimea vote.

(AP Photo/Sang Tan)

he said. "We'll just have to wait and see."

He brushed aside the threats of sanctions and other punitive measures made by U.S. President Barack Obama and European leaders, saying that Kerry "made no threats regarding Russia." He said the sanctions that have been widely discussed by officials and reported in the news media would be "a counterproductive instrument."

"This will definitely not help our mutual interest," he said.

Asked why other countries did not support Crimea's desire for independence, he replied that they treated efforts to declare independence case by case. "If Kosovo is a special case, then Crimea is also a special case," he said.

Putin spoke by telephone

spiral."

He added: "I urge all concerned to avoid provocation and hasty decisions in the coming days. The focus must be to engage in direct dialogue aimed at agreeing on specific measures that will pave the way towards a diplomatic solution."

As of Friday, there had been no sign that Putin was prepared to take the "off ramp" that the Obama administration has repeatedly offered. The Kremlin provided no hint of flexibility in a paper it sent to the State Department on Monday night that argued that Crimea's secession from Ukraine would be as legitimate as Kosovo's independence from Serbia, which the United States supported.

And in a new episode of muscle flexing, Putin or-

cited violence during competing rallies in the eastern city of Donetsk on Thursday night that left one person dead and many others injured. The ministry attributed the violence to "right-wing groups" that supported the government in Kiev, though reports from witnesses and even footage on state television suggested that pro-Russian protesters had attacked their rivals.

"Russia is aware of its responsibility for the lives of compatriots and fellow citizens in Ukraine and reserves the right to take people under protection," the ministry's statement said.

One Western official, who asked not to be named because he was discussing intelligence reports, said, "It is clearly political coercion, at a minimum." □

New York City to arrange housing for families displaced in blast

MARC SANTORA

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NEW YORK - New York City officials announced efforts on Friday to house dozens of families that were displaced after an explosion collapsed two buildings in East Harlem, killing eight people.

Two days after the blast, which also injured roughly 60 people, workers continued their recovery mission, using sonar equipment to search voids and sifting through the tangle of twisted metal and concrete still at the site.

Nearly 75 percent of the debris has been removed, Fire Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano said at a news conference with Mayor Bill de Blasio. But Cassano said investigators had yet to reach the

basement in one of the buildings, which could be critical in determining the cause of the gas leak that led to the blast.

Cassano said emergency personnel expected to reach the basement and clear it of water and other debris by Saturday afternoon, at which point the investigation would be the primary focus.

De Blasio said the most immediate challenge was finding shelter for at least 55 families, including over 50 children, who either lived in the buildings or have not been able to return to neighboring buildings because the heat and power were cut off.

Many families spent the first two nights after the explosion at a Red Cross shelter at a Salvation Army build-



Aisha Watts, left, who was displaced by a gas explosion that destroyed two buildings in the East Harlem neighborhood, wipes away tears while talking with Mayor Bill de Blasio and his wife Chirlane McCray at a shelter operated by the Salvation Army in New York, March 14, 2014. Investigators have yet to reach the basement in one of the buildings, which could be critical in determining the cause of the gas leak that led to the blast.
(Craig Ruffe/Pool via The New York Times)

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ing, which de Blasio toured before speaking to reporters.

Men, women and children were bunked together in a large gymnasium. Military-style cots were unfolded and clustered into family groups.

Marisol Gonzalez, 49, who lives nearby and was staying at the shelter, said the assistance could not come soon enough. "Emotionally, this destroys someone," Gonzalez said.

Some residents were allowed to return to their homes briefly Friday to retrieve personal items and pets. De Blasio said residents might not be able to move back into their homes for days, if not much longer. "There is a constant effort being made to determine when people can go back into their buildings if their buildings are still there," he said.

The city was providing several options for the families, he said, including 50 apartments controlled by Homeless Services, which are in private buildings and run by nonprofit organizations. The city is also working with the YMCA to house single residents. For those who will be displaced for a longer period of time, de Blasio said, the Real Estate Board of New York will make at least 34 apartments on the

East Side available for up to three months.

City officials were also working with the New York state Association for Affordable Housing to provide both temporary and permanent apartments.

"This means that whatever a families need as a result of this crisis, we have an option for them," the mayor said. Even as the city worked to find them homes, some families were getting confirmation that those they thought were missing had been killed.

Those killed were identified by relatives and Mexican officials as Griselda Camacho, 44; Andreas Panagopoulos, 43; Carmen Tanco, 67; and a mother and daughter, Rosaura Barrios Vazquez, 43, and Rosaura Hernandez Barrios, 21. On Friday, the police said that George Ameado, 44, and Alexis Salas, 22, were among the fatalities.

(STORY CAN END HERE. OPTIONAL MATERIAL FOLLOWS.)

Hundreds of firefighters, construction workers and emergency personnel have spent the last three days in one of the most intense search and rescue operations in recent years. For hours after the blast, they had to battle a fire before they could begin to look for survivors. □



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Obama, Biden kick off St Patrick's Day early

NEDRA PICKLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — St. Patrick's Day came to the White House a few days early this year.

Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny kicked off the holiday at events across Washington Friday, including a meeting with President Barack Obama at the White House.

"I think it's fair to say that there are very few countries around the world where the people-to-people ties are so strong," said Obama, who donned a green tie and sprigs of four-leaf clovers on his lapel.

The two leaders then headed to Congress for a lunch.



President Barack Obama shakes hands with Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny, both donning green ties, in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Friday, March 14, 2014. The president said he and the prime minister discussed Ukraine during an Oval Office meeting.

(AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

Sitting alongside Republican House Speaker John Boehner, Obama and Kenny were entertained by a two-man Irish band and a bagpiper. Kenny started his day with a breakfast at the residence of Vice President Joe Biden, who has an Irish background. Biden and Kenny dined on eggs, potatoes and Irish soda bread.

Obama joked that Biden "lobbies me every week to go to Ireland."

The president has his own distant family ties to Ireland. In 2011, he visited the village of Moneygall, the hometown of his great-great-great grandfather.

"Tell everybody in Mon-

eygall I said, 'hi'," Obama said. Amid the festivities, Obama and Kenny addressed the political crisis in Ukraine, where voters in the Crimean Peninsula will hold a referendum Sunday on whether to join Russia. Moscow moved military forces into Crimea after Ukraine's pro-Russian leader fled amid popular protests.

"We continue to hope that there's a diplomatic solution to be found," Obama said. "But the United States and Europe stand united not only in its message about Ukrainian sovereignty but also that there will be consequences if, in fact, that sovereignty continues to be violated." □

Sam Adams pulls out of Boston St. Patrick's parade

BOSTON (AP) — The maker of Sam Adams beer announced Friday that it is withdrawing its sponsorship of Boston's St. Patrick's Day parade because organizers exclude gay groups.

Boston Beer Co.'s decision came a day after a bar in Boston's South End said it would no longer serve Sam Adams beer because of the brewer's affiliation with the parade, which is scheduled for Sunday.

Mayor Martin Walsh and U.S. Rep. Stephen Lynch have been trying to broker a deal that would have allowed a gay group to march, but those negotiations broke down.

"We were hopeful that both sides of this issue would be able to come to an agreement that would allow everyone, regardless of orientation, to participate in the parade. But given the current status of the negotiations, we realize this may not be possible," Boston Beer Co. said in its

statement.

"We share these sentiments with Mayor Walsh, Congressman Lynch and others and therefore we will not participate in this year's parade."

The brewer said it would continue to sponsor the annual St. Patrick's Day Breakfast, which is regularly attended by most of the state's major politicians. That is also on Sunday.

A Boston Beer Co. spokeswoman did not immediately return a call.

The parade organizers' phone went unanswered Friday.

The Irish-American mayor said he would not march in the parade unless gay groups were allowed to march.

He tried to broker a deal between the gay rights advocacy group MassEquality and the organizers, the South Boston Allied War Veterans Council. A 1995 U.S. Supreme Court decision ruled that the council

could include or exclude whichever groups it wanted.

A sticking point was MassEquality's request that its members be allowed to carry banners or signs iden-

tifying themselves as gay, which organizers did not want.

Organizers said they had been "misled," because LGBT Veterans for Equality, an affiliate of MassEquality,

was not a recognized veterans' organization.

The parade, one of the largest St. Patrick's Day parades in the nation, draws as many as 1 million spectators to South Boston □

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Suspect in deadly festival crash charged

WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The drunken-driving suspect who police say killed two people after he smashed his car through a street barricade at the South By Southwest festival did not use his brakes and even accelerated as he approached crowds, according to an arrest warrant released Friday.

A man from the Netherlands and a local woman were killed. Rashad Charjuan Owens was charged with one count of capital murder, though additional charges can be added later. Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo has said Owens intentionally steered toward pedestrians early Thursday in hopes of escaping an officer who was trying to pull him over. Acevedo has suggested Owens could face two capital murder charges and as many as 23 counts of aggravated assault with a vehicle. The 21-year-old remains in police custody after a district court judge set his bail at \$3 million. Jail records did not list an attorney for him. According to the arrest warrant, Owens told police that he "got scared" when he saw police lights behind him around 12:30 a.m. Thursday because outstanding warrants meant he could go to prison for five years. Owens told police he's facing old kidnapping warrants issued as part of a custody battle over his daughter. A breath test indicated Owens' blood-alcohol content was .114, exceeding the legal limit of .08, the arrest warrant released Friday says.

The officer who tried to stop Owens was looking for suspected drunken drivers when he spotted a 2012 gray Honda Civic that didn't have its headlights turned on, the arrest warrant says. Owens then made a turn from a middle lane and "would have caused a crash" with the police cruiser had the officer not turned to avoid it, according to the warrant. Investigators say Owens then cut through a



This undated photo provided by the Austin Police Department in Austin, Texas, shows Rashad Charjuan Owens. Owens, the driver who killed two people when he smashed his car through a barrier and into a street thronged with attendees of the South By Southwest festival, has been charged with capital murder. A district judge on Friday, March 14, 2014, set bail for Owens at \$3 million. He remains jailed.

(AP Photo/Austin Police Department)

gas station and sped the wrong way down a one-way street before crashing through police barriers blocking a street closed for South By Southwest festivities — forcing another police officer manning the roadblock on foot to dive out of the way. Police say Owens then plowed into a crowd of concertgoers, hitting and killing two people. Investigators say he eventually crashed into a taxi and parked van and tried to run before police subdued him with a stun gun.

The warrant says a video from the police unit giving chase "shows the Honda accelerating into crowds, not simply crowded areas but crowds of people who are hit by the car and flung into the air." It adds that Owens drove "for almost three city blocks, accelerating into crowds and does not use his brakes, as in the video there are no brake lights visible from the rear of the Honda."

Court records indicate that

Owens pleaded guilty to driving under the influence in Fairbanks, Alaska, in October 2011, when he was 19. He also was charged with leaving the scene of an accident, but that was later dismissed. Owens also faced 2012 charges in Alaska of criminal mischief, and a warrant was issued for him after he failed to appear in court. In 2010, meanwhile, he was arrested in Texas by Killeen Independent School District police for criminal trespassing and pleaded guilty. □

US judge strikes Arkansas' 12-week abortion ban law

KELLY P. KISSEL
Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (AP) — A federal judge Friday struck down Arkansas' attempt to ban most abortions beginning 12 weeks into a woman's pregnancy, saying viability, not a heartbeat, remains the key factor in determining whether abortions should be allowed. U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright last year had stopped enforcement of the law while she reviewed it, and on Friday she declared that it was unconstitutional. She cited previous court decisions that said abortions shouldn't be restricted until after a fetus reaches viability, which is typically at 22 to 24 weeks.

"The state presents no evidence that a fetus can live outside the mother's womb at twelve weeks," the judge wrote.

By adopting a ban based on a fetal heartbeat, and not the ability to survive, the Arkansas Legislature had adopted the nation's toughest abortion law last March. Two weeks later, North Dakota lawmakers passed a bill restricting abortions at six weeks — or before some women would know they're pregnant. That law is on hold.

In her decision Friday, Wright said only a doctor could determine viability.

"The Supreme Court has ... stressed that it is not the proper function of the legislature or the courts to place viability at a specific point in the gestation period," Wright wrote.

Wright left in place a portion of the law that requires doctors to check for a fetal heartbeat and to notify the pregnant woman if one is present.

Gov. Mike Beebe had vetoed the bill, citing the viability standard. But Republicans, controlling the Statehouse for the first time since Reconstruction, overrode him with a simple majority vote.

"The ruling is what the governor predicted in his veto letter last year," Beebe spokesman Matt DeCamp said.

The state attorney general's office said it was reviewing possible next steps. "Today's decision was not a surprise," spokesman Aaron Sadler said.

Bettina Brownstein, who represented two doctors who perform abortions at a Little Rock clinic, said the 12-week ban was "demeaning to women."

State Sen. Jason Rapert who sponsored the fetal heartbeat bill, said he was encouraged that that portion of the measure was upheld.

"Now, anyone who presents for abortion in our state, they're going to be given an opportunity to know if there's a living heartbeat in their womb, and that is a win for the pro-life movement," Rapert said. "When people have to face the reality that there's a living heartbeat in their womb, that will make them rethink about taking the life away from their baby." □

US Financial Front:

Private employment slowly reclaims pre-downturn peak

FLOYD NORRIS

© 2014 New York Times

Two presidential elections have taken place since employment by U.S. businesses hit a peak of almost 116 million workers. This seems likely to be the month when a new high is

number of employees was down 7.6 percent from the peak.

There have been six cycles since 1950 in which the number of people employed by the private sector fell at least 3 percent from the peak before the

ery continues at its current pace.

Of the six severe downturns since 1950, the first four showed recovery in less than 2 1/2 years. The downturn that began in 2001 lasted more than four years, and this one

before. In fact, the short-term unemployment rate reached a record low in December. Fewer people are losing jobs now, but many who became unemployed in 2008 and 2009 are still looking.

There have also been noticeable trends in employment in several fields since January 2008. Management consulting stayed about level during the downturn, and then shot up in 2010. □



Recruiter Valera Kulow, left, speaks with job seeker Monic Spencer during a career fair in Dallas. February 2014, seems to have put an end to a period that featured the largest drop in employment and the slowest recovery of any time since the Great Depression.

(AP Photo/LM Otero)

finally reached, ending a period that featured the largest drop in employment and the slowest recovery of any period since the Great Depression.

In February, the government reported last week, 115,848,000 people were employed by the private sector, just 129,000 fewer than the peak set in January 2008, shortly after what became known as the Great Recession began. That is well below the average gain in recent months. At the bottom of the cycle, in February 2010, the

downturn. Until the latest one, the largest decline was 5.6 percent, during a sharp downturn in jobs that began in 1957 and ended in 1959.

Men suffered more than women in the recent downturn, with the number of jobs held by men falling 9.9 percent at the worst point, twice the decline in jobs held by women. Women now hold more private sector jobs than ever before, but it is likely to be sometime in 2015 when men surpass their previous high, assuming the recov-

has gone on more than six years. All but the first one were harder on men than women.

While the cycle now ending has been the longest and the deepest, it has also been unusual in the nature of the unemployment that occurred. Since the spring of 2009, the long-term unemployment rate - the portion of the workforce that has been out of work more than six months - has been higher than the short-term rate, the portion out of work for less than a month. That had never happened

Buffett's Hathaway compensation rises 15%

OMAHA, Nebraska (AP) — Warren Buffett's compensation from Berkshire Hathaway Inc. rose 15 percent last year to \$485,606, although the billionaire's salary remained \$100,000. The increase came in "other compensation," which includes company-paid costs for Buffett's personal and home security. As usu-

al, Buffett reimbursed Berkshire \$50,000 for personal costs such as postage and phone calls.

Buffett, 83, is the Omaha, Nebraska, company's chairman and chief executive.

Most of Buffett's wealth comes from his Berkshire stock. The share price rose 32 percent in 2013.

The salaries of Buffett and Vice Chairman Charles Munger have been set at \$100,000 for more than 25 years, and Buffett doesn't want or expect a raise, the conglomerate said in a regulatory filing Friday. Unlike many other companies, Berkshire Hathaway doesn't grant stock options to executives. □

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Rural spot settled by religious group fears encroachment

PATRICIA LEIGH BROWN

© 2014 New York Times

MODESTO, Calif. - Farmers and other residents of the rural district known as Wood Colony refer to the 110-year-old arboreal landmark in their midst - a gigantic walnut tree of Grimm's fairy-tale proportions - as simply, the Tree. To many people in this unincorporated community, settled more than a century ago by a religious group called the Old German Baptist Brethren, the mighty tree is a kind of tabernacle, a living testament to the district's deep roots, fertile soil and unshakable resolve. The colony, just under a two-hour drive from San Francisco, is little known to outsiders, which is just the way residents like it. Many of the Brethren, a plain Anabaptist group somewhat akin to the Amish and Mennonites, are fourth- and fifth-generation farmers who tend an unspoiled landscape of bee boxes and walnut and almond orchards. But a recent skirmish with the city of Modesto over

plans to bring about 1,800 acres of Wood Colony under city jurisdiction, which many residents regard as a blueprint for development, has forced this reticent community into the public eye. In a place where "Oh, gracious!" is a common expletive, "Pray for Rain" signs along the district's two-lane byways have been joined by ones urging citizens to "Keep Wood Colony Green" and "Save Wood Colony: Almonds, Not Asphalt." "My granddaughter still lives in the ranch purchased by my great-grandfather," said Alan Cover, an almond and walnut farmer who also raises prized lambs. "That's a thread that runs through this community." The city's Chamber of Commerce, supported by the mayor and other elected officials, says that some sort of "pathway to prosperity" is needed to expand the tax base and address chronic unemployment, which hovers around 13 percent, twice the national average. The updated plan calls for bringing part

of Wood Colony into the city's sphere of influence, making future annexation possible and transforming a nearby road into a four-lane highway with overpasses to help lure industrial, office and business park development.

But for many residents of the district - which covers roughly 3 to 4 square miles, depending on who is counting - the political and geographic boundary between Wood Colony and the city is sacrosanct. While more accepting of

help," he recalled. "I came up with about 200 names." Many Brethren, including Wagner, wear traditional dress. Bonneted women stitch their own clothes amid neat stacks of colorful fabric and glass jars filled with buttons, and the



Lloyd Wagner, left, a high school teacher, with students at the Brethren Heritage School in the Wood Colony area of unincorporated Modesto, California. A recent skirmish with the city of Modesto over plans to bring about 1,800 acres of Wood Colony, which is home to a plain Anabaptist group somewhat akin to the Amish, under city jurisdiction has forced the reticent community into the public eye.

(Ramin Rahimian/The New York Times)



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modern technology than the Amish, the Old German Baptist Brethren, who make up about one-third of the district's 1,000 or so residents, live a life atypical for California, where families remaining in one place for generations are a rarity. From his classroom window at the Brethren Heritage School, Lloyd Wagner, a 51-year-old social studies and English teacher, can see the cemetery where his baby daughter, his brother who died at birth, his grandparents and most of his great-grandparents are buried. Fourteen years ago, Wagner was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré syndrome, which left him paralyzed; he has since recovered use of his hands and arms. In the hospital, he said, he had a lot of time to contemplate life. "I was thinking about how many people within a 5-mile radius would probably drop everything to

twice-yearly visit of the sewing-machine repairman is a major event. In Modesto, Wood Colony residents, including the Old German Baptist Brethren and their allies, have shown up by the hundreds at City Council meetings, which have been the most contentious in recent memory. The Brethren "don't speak up," said William Heinrich, who was raised in the Brethren church but is now senior pastor at the Sovereign Grace Baptist Church. Longtime residents like Paul Wenger, the president of the California Farm Bureau Federation, who operates the Wood Colony Nut Co. with his sons, said the emphasis on "jobs, jobs, jobs" did not acknowledge almonds and walnuts as two of the state's most lucrative crops, buoyed by global demand and endorsed as "superfood" by Dr. Mehmet Oz. (Modesto's AAA Minor League Baseball team is called the Nuts.)

Venezuela's Maduro: 'Miami lobby' leads US policy

JORGE RUEDA

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Friday that South Florida politicians are leading the United States into an extremist foreign policy against his country and his foreign minister called U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry a murderer.

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio and U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen are leading a "Miami lobby" trying to influence President Barack Obama, Maduro said in a televised news conference Friday. Rubio and Ros-Lehtinen are co-sponsoring efforts in their respective chambers to impose sanctions on members of the Venezuelan government tied to human rights abuses.

"Obama can't let himself be taken by the Miami lobby," Maduro said. "I call on the United States to take it easy. They're taking President Obama to an abyss and he's going to end up crashing."

Anti-government street protests by Venezuelans fed

up with soaring inflation, violent crime and shortages of basic items such as flour and cooking oil have roiled Venezuela for more than a month. The Venezuelan government says at least 25 people have died in the turmoil since Feb. 12.

Daily street protests have rocked parts of the capital and other cities. After three people died in the central city of Valencia Wednesday, Maduro said he was stepping up security operations and called on the National Guard to begin searching buildings in areas where violence erupts. Since the start of the protests, the government has accused the U.S. of trying to overthrow his government.

Last month, Venezuela expelled three U.S. diplomats, accusing them of organizing students to participate in anti-government protests.

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elias Java echoed that theme Friday, singling out Kerry as a "murderer of the Venezuelan people."

"Each time we're about to



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro speaks during a press conference at the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela, Friday, March 14, 2014. The Venezuelan government is stepping up security operations in Caracas and other cities where demonstrators are blocking streets, avenues and highways. Maduro said that those involved in creating road barricades will be arrested.

(AP Photo/Alejandro Cegarra)

isolate and reduce the violence, out comes Mr. Kerry to speak," and up go the barricades and the violence, Java said.

On Thursday, Kerry told a congressional committee that the U.S. was looking for a way to get Maduro to engage in dialogue with his own people and respect human rights.

Destabilizing the Venezuelan government would have "unbearable consequences" for the United States, Maduro said. And if Venezuela were destabilized, it would bring "the worst period of political and economic instability in Latin America."

Maduro also said Friday that any foreign airlines that reduced or suspended flights in and out of Venezuela would face severe measures.

"There's no excuse for airlines to reduce flights to Venezuela," he said. Airlines have struggled under a \$3.3 billion debt owed by the government. He said any airline that left would not be allowed back as long as he's in power. □

Israel fires into Lebanon after border bombing

IAN DEITCH

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP)

— Israel fired tank and artillery shells Friday night into southern Lebanon after a roadside bomb exploded near its soldiers patrolling the border.

Lt. Col. Peter Lerner, a military spokesman, said the explosion damaged a military vehicle near the border. He said no soldiers were hurt in the blast, though three went to hospital for observation to rule out internal injuries.

He said the military immediately responded with tank and artillery fire directed at "Hezbollah positions and other suspicious locations." Soldiers also used smoke-screen munitions to mask their movements, Lerner said.

He said the military is on alert and reinforcing its presence on the border.

Lerner said there is a "Hezbollah connection" to the roadside bomb but would not go into detail. Hezbollah had no immediate comment Friday night.

The Lebanese army said in a statement that a roadside bomb hit the Israeli patrol around 5:45 p.m. local time. In response, "the Israeli enemy forces fired several artillery shells, nine of which fell on Bastara Farms."

Lebanese security officials said at least two artillery shells fired from Israel landed near the village of Halta in southern Lebanon, but caused no casualties.

The Lebanese officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they weren't authorized to speak publicly to journalists. A Halta resident reached by telephone said at least six or seven shells landed in the hills east of the village. □

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Britain reburies soldiers lost in World War I

GREG KELLER

Associated Press

LOOS-EN-GOHELLE, France

(AP) — Scotsman William McAleer had been in France barely two months when, just before sunrise on Sept. 25, 1915, he was among thousands of other troops who launched the British army's largest attack so far of World War I.

By the next day, the 22-year-old private from a seaside town in Fife was dead. Almost 60,000 British troops died in the Battle of Loos, and a third disappeared with no known grave. McAleer was one of them, until nearly a century later, when workers building a new prison turned up his remains in a common grave. On Friday, McAleer and 19 other still unidentified British soldiers were reburied with full military honors in a ceremony in this sleepy northern French village, close to where they fell in battle. The ceremony was a reminder of the horrors of a war that devastated this continent 100 years ago — and as a reminder of why many Europeans to-

day are so wary of seeing a new conflict on their eastern flank in Ukraine.

A bagpiper played "Amazing Grace" as McAleer's coffin was carried through the fog-shrouded cemetery Friday morning by six Royal Regiment of Scotland soldiers wearing kilts. A distant relative of McAleer's, Stephen McLeod, represented McAleer's family at the funeral.

"He was my great uncle. My gran gave me his Mass card when I joined the army," said McLeod, 47, of Cowdenbeath, Fife.

"In the centenary year (of the start of the war), to be able to remember those who've fallen, and for it be your kith and kin, how can you find the words?" McLeod said after the ceremony. Around 200 people, some from as far away as Australia, turned out for the hour-long ceremony. Many were history buffs who'd heard about the ceremony on the website of the Western Front Association, a historical society. "We've been doing this for 30 years," said Iris Oakey,

an Englishwoman who attended with her brother, John Mawson. Their grandfather fought further north on the Western Front at Ypres in Belgium. Together they've visited World War I sites in over a dozen countries. "Every cemetery has

a story, every single one," Oakey said.

The Battle of Loos was a failed attempt to break through the German line. It was memorialized in English poet Robert Graves' autobiography "Good-bye to All That." Rudyard Kipling's

son John also died here, and is buried at another British cemetery nearby. It was Kipling who proposed the phrase "Known Unto God" for unidentified casualties that is engraved on limestone tombstones across the Western Front. □



Mist gathers on the horizon at Dud's Corner World War One Cemetery in Loos-en-Gohelle, France. Private William McAleer, of the 7th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers, was killed in action on Sept. 26, 1915 during the Battle of Loos and his name has been on the wall of the missing at Dud's Corner for nearly 100 years. His body was found and identified in 2010, during routine construction in the area, and he was reburied with full military honors at the Loos British Cemetery on Friday, March 14, 2014.

(AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

Rwandan ex-intel chief convicted in genocide trial

JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Paris court delivered France's first-ever conviction for genocide Friday, sentencing a Rwandan former intelligence chief to 25 years in prison over the 1994 killings of at least 500,000 people in the African country.

The landmark trial of 54-year-old Pascal Simbikangwa sets off what could be the first of dozens of French trials into one of the 20th century's greatest atrocities — two decades after it happened — and provides a judicial reckoning for a former colonial power that still has many ties to African countries like Mali, Central African Republic and beyond.

In a late-night verdict after 5 ½ weeks of trial, the nine-person jury found Simbikangwa guilty of genocide

and complicity to crimes against humanity for killings in Kigali, the capital, while throwing out other counts involving killings in the western town of Gisenyi. His defense lawyers said they would discuss Saturday with Simbikangwa (Sim-BEE-kangh-wah) whether to appeal. Defense lawyer Alexandra Bourgeot said she was "appalled" at the verdict, accusing the court of a poor understanding of the case and expressing bafflement at the "incoherency" that a genocide conviction would merit 25 years in prison. Simbikangwa, however, wasn't surprised at the verdict, she said: "He himself told us beforehand, 'I have lived through a lot of things that I can withstand.'"

Emmanuel Daoud, a lawyer for the International Federation of Human Rights,

which lined up behind the state's case, declined to comment whether on the sentence suited the crime: "I don't have personal satisfaction knowing whether he got 25 years or a life sentence. What was important was the guilty verdict."

In many ways, the trial was less about a little-known man's role in a vast killing machine and more about a coming-to-terms with a judicial blindness in France, a country that sees itself as a paragon of human rights but has had its own culprits of crimes against humanity, such as during the Nazi occupation of France in World War II. Only a few years ago, such a trial might have been unthinkable — until a thaw in bilateral relations allowed for French investigators to start traveling to Rwanda to build their cases. □



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After Crimea, wary Eastern Europe asks: who's next

ALISON MUTLER
MONIKA SCISLOWSKA
Associated Press
BUCHAREST, Romania (AP)

— Broken promises of help from the West. A tragic history of Russian invasion that goes back centuries. A painful awareness that conflicts in this volatile region are contagious. These are the factors that make nations across Eastern Europe watch events in Ukraine — and tremble.

From leaders to ordinary people, there is a palpable sense of fear that Russia, seemingly able to thumb its nose at Western powers at will, may seek more opportunities for incursions in its former imperial backyard. The question many people are asking is: Who's next?

"There is first of all fear ... that there could be a possible contagion," Romanian Foreign Minister Titus Corlatean told The Associated Press in an interview. "Romania is extremely pre-occupied."

Specifically, concerns run high that after taking over the strategic peninsula of Crimea, Russian President Vladimir Putin may be tempted to try a land grab in Moldova, where Russian troops are stationed in the breakaway province of Trans-Dniester. It's one of several "frozen conflicts" across Eastern Europe whose ranks Crimea — many in the West now say with resignation — has joined.

In Romania, which neighbors predominantly Romanian-speaking Moldova, Monica Nistorescu urged the West to stand up to Putin — lest he come to view himself as unbeatable.

"The world should stop seeing Putin as the invincible dragon with silver teeth," said Nistorescu, "because we will succeed in making him believe that Russia is what it once was."

Across the border, Moldovan fears of Russian invasion were in no way theoretical: "We are afraid the conflict in Ukraine could reach us in Moldova," said Victor Cotruta, a clerk in the capital Chisinau. "Russian troops could take over

Moldova in a day."

Many in the region are keenly aware that Poland had guarantees of military aid from France and Britain against Nazi aggression. But when Hitler invaded in 1939, France and Britain didn't send troops to Poland despite their declarations of war. That history feeds skepticism that NATO would come to the aid of eastern member nations in the event of a Russian attack.

"Poland's history shows that we should not count on others," novelist Jaroslaw Szulski told The AP.

Such feelings are particularly acute in the Baltic nations that are members of NATO and the European Union. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have sizable Russian populations that Moscow periodically declares it needs to "protect" — the key word Putin used in justifying its invasion of Crimea.

"I'm a bit skeptical," said Tiina Seeman in Tallinn, Estonia, when asked if she believed the West would come to her nation's rescue. Moscow routinely accuses Estonia and Latvia of discriminating against their Russian-speaking minorities. Tensions between Russia and Estonia soared in 2007, when protests by Russian-speakers against the relocation of a Soviet-era war monument ended in street riots. Many Estonians blamed Moscow — which has handed out passports to ethnic Russians in the Baltics — for stirring up the protests.

As she arrived at an EU emergency summit on Ukraine last week, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė expressed more confidence than Seeman in the U.S.-led security alliance: "Thank God! Thank God that we are already 10 years in NATO!"

But she, too, expressed grave concerns about Russia's actions: "Russia today is trying to rewrite the borders in Europe after World War II."

History weighs heavily in Eastern European minds as they contemplate the future.

Many people see Russia's seizure of Crimea as similar to their experiences after World War II, when Soviet troops rolled through towns and villages, effectively

putting them under the Kremlin's rule for decades. "Of course there's a potential threat for us in the future," Katerina Zapadlova, a waitress in a Prague cafe,

said with a bitter smile. She recalled how Soviet troops rolled into Czechoslovakia in 1968 to crush the Prague Spring liberalization movement. □



In this photo taken Friday March 7, 2014, Russian students Olga, left, and Yulia protest against Russia's military incursion in Ukraine in front of the Russian Embassy in Warsaw, Poland. The banners read: "Wake Up Russians. (I'm) ashamed for the country" and "March 16, a referendum in Crimea. A Day of Shame for Russia." Broken promises of help from the West. A tragic history of Russian invasion that goes back centuries. A painful awareness that conflicts in this volatile region are contagious. These are the factors that make nations across Eastern Europe watch events in Ukraine. (AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)



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Honduras: US man ran child porn, prostitution ring

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — Honduran authorities say they have dismantled a criminal ring involving a U.S. man already jailed in Miami and two Honduran citizens who forced girls to become prostitutes and pose naked for pornography.

Prosecutor Nora Urbina alleged Thursday that U.S. suspect Christopher Glenn lured girls from many parts of the Central American nation by promising them to find them husbands or jobs as maids. Instead, the

prosecutor said, the girls were taken to a house north of Tegucigalpa where they were sexually abused and used to make pornography.

Urbina says Honduras will not ask for Glenn's extradition because U.S. authori-

ties can charge defendants with child pornography and human trafficking when the crime is committed elsewhere.

Honduras says U.S. agents participated in the investigation. The U.S. Embassy declined to comment. □

Jamaica rapper, 3 co-defendants guilty of murder

**DAVID McFADDEN
Associated Press**

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP)

— Popular dancehall reggae star Vybz Kartel and three co-defendants were convicted of murder Thursday in a high-profile trial under heavy security in this Caribbean country's supreme court.

As Jamaican police in riot gear guarded barricaded streets outside, 10 members of an 11-person jury found Kartel and the three others guilty of the October 2011 killing of Clive "Lizard" Williams. One defendant was cleared of wrongdoing.

In a bizarre twist, a male juror was arrested Thursday evening on charges of attempting to bribe the jury foreman in an attempt to influence the panel to free Kartel, who is known for innovative, but often violent, X-rated lyrics. Authorities confirmed the arrest but disclosed few details.

Prosecutors alleged Williams was beaten to death at Kartel's home in August 2011 after being lured there to answer for two missing illegal guns. His body has never been found. Police testified they retrieved a text message from Kartel's phone saying Williams was chopped up in a "mincemeat" so fine that his remains would never be found.

Dennis Howard, author of the book "Rantin' from Inside the Dancehall," said the verdict was positive for the brash musical genre whose most prominent performers have a history of getting in trouble with the law, though not to the extreme Kartel has.

"The artists are realizing that they cannot be a bad man and an entertainer," Howard said.

Before the day's session started, police blocked off streets around the supreme court, seeking to prevent any disruption by fans of the entertainer. Still, shortly before the jury started to deliberate in the afternoon, about 200 people briefly broke through barricades at one intersection shouting "Free Kartel!" □

Peru ex-President Fujimori has stroke, is stable

**FRANKLIN BRICENO
Associated Press**

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori suffered a stroke on Friday and was hospi-

talized in stable condition with some loss of control of his left upper arm, his doctor said. Neurologist, Dr. Juan Barreto, told The Associated Press that Fujimori

was conscious and speaking and being treated to ensure his loss of motor skills does not become permanent.

The stroke occurred early

Friday at the police compound where the 75-year-old Fujimori is serving a 25-year sentence for authorizing death squads during his 1990-2000 presidency. The former president's lawyer, William Castillo, told the AP that Fujimori would be released from the hospital on Saturday.

Barreto said the strike could be related to stress and high blood pressure.

Fujimori is currently in the midst of his fifth criminal trial, this one for allegedly diverting millions in public funds to tabloids that were used to attack his political opponents and back his 1998 and 2000 re-election bids. At some of the court hearings, he has appeared disheveled and disoriented. Fujimori fled in disgrace and faxed in his resignation 2000 after videotapes emerged of his spy chief, Vladimiro Montesinos, bribing prominent politicians and businessmen.

In a failed attempt to mount a political comeback, Fujimori tried to return from exile in Japan but was arrested in Chile and has been jailed in his homeland since 2007.

A medical team determined last year that Fujimori suffers from depression, hypertension, chronic gastritis and lumbago, among other maladies. □



Jailed former President Alberto Fujimori, photographed through a glass window, leaves a courtroom at a police base on the outskirts of Lima, Peru, Thursday, March 13, 2014. Fujimori's attending neurologist says that he suffered a stroke early Friday, March 14, 2014, at the police compound where the 75-year-old is serving a 25-year sentence for authorizing death squads. (AP Photo/Martin Mejia)

3 tourists cleared in St. Maarten burglar death

**JUDY FITZPATRICK
Associated Press**

PHILIPSBURG, St. Maarten

(AP) — A group of U.S. and Swedish tourists who caught a man breaking into their rented villa and held him in a chokehold that led to his death will not be prosecuted, officials announced Friday. The three tourists had been staying in the Dutch

Caribbean island of St. Maarten when three men broke in on Jan. 29, police said. Two of the suspects escaped, but a third one was caught and held until police arrived, according to public prosecutor Tineke Kamps. An autopsy found that the man died from suffocation but showed few signs of external violence,

she said. "The public prosecutor has reviewed the case as a tragic accident," she said. The family of the suspect who died could not be immediately reached for comment. Kamps told The Associated Press that two of the tourists were from Sweden and one from the U.S. She declined to identify them or say who held the

man down, noting that the suspect struggled forcefully. Police had said earlier that the two other suspects tried to free the man by throwing stones at the tourists. She said prosecutors discussed the role that self-defense played in the man's death and concluded that prosecution was not "feasible or desirable." □



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cial day for lunch. So come to Bugaloe, drink your favorite cocktail, and make your friends green with jealousy of where you are on St. Patrick's Day. Or even better, don't let your friends miss out on all the fun and ask them to join you at Bugaloe. Go green and celebrate St. Patrick's Day Bugaloe style and find out what else is green. For more information go to: www.Bugaloe.com. □



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Revis, Sproles, Smith, Harrison, Tuck on move

BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

Cornerback Darrelle Revis and running back Darren Sproles have new homes in the NFL, while wide receiver Steve Smith and James Harrison are homeless.

Revis' stay in Tampa Bay was short, and he might not be in New England much longer. After less than a year as a Buccaneer, he was cut on Wednesday and officially agreed to terms with the Patriots on Thursday — but only on a one-year deal, albeit worth about \$12 million.

New England had a need at the position because Aqib Talib left for Denver. Revis' contract impasses have led him from the New York Jets to the Bucs to the Patriots since last April, and he was the latest big name on the move.

Versatile running back-kick returner Sproles will add some juice to Philadelphia's already high-energy offense after he was acquired from New Orleans. And someone — Baltimore, maybe — will grab veteran Smith after the standout wide receiver was released by Carolina. Smith has been the face of Carolina's franchise for a decade. But he turns 35 in May and would have cost the Panthers \$7 million under this year's salary cap. The Panthers still owe Smith



In this Dec. 22, 2013, file photo, Carolina Panthers' Steve Smith, left, catches a pass as New Orleans Saints' Keenan Lewis, right, defends in the first half of an NFL football game in Charlotte, N.C. The Panthers released their all-time leading receiver on Thursday, March 13, 2014, after 13 seasons.

Associated Press

\$3 million.

As for Harrison, the 2008 defensive player of the year was cut by Cincinnati. Harrison, 35, had a limited role with the Bengals after he helped Pittsburgh win a pair of Super Bowls. He played in 15 games, starting 10, and finished 12th on the team in tackles.

It was yet another busy

period on the third day of NFL free agency in which Jonathan Martin signed a two-year contract with San Francisco.

Martin passed his physical to complete a trade that sent the tackle from the Miami Dolphins to the 49ers to be reunited with his college coach, Jim Harbaugh. The teams first announced the

move on Tuesday for Martin, who left the Dolphins last autumn after accusing teammate Richie Incognito of bullying in a scandal that overshadowed another mediocre Miami season. Tampa Bay cut tackle Donald Penn and signed Anthony Collins to replace him; Oakland signed defensive end Justin Tuck,

who helped the New York Giants win two Super Bowls; Green Bay re-signed line-backer Mike Neal and tight end Andrew Quarless; and Jacksonville formally signed defensive end Chris Clemens, defensive lineman Ziggy Hood and re-signed defensive end Jason Babin, who led the team with 7½ sacks in 2013. □

Major League Soccer OKs gay player protections

ALBANY, New York (AP) —

Major League Soccer has agreed to new measures to protect gay players from discrimination and harassment following similar steps by Major League Baseball and the National Football

League.

The efforts are aimed at reinforcing the league's policies against discrimination. They include expanded sensitivity training for players, a centralized complaint system and posting a

code of conduct prohibiting discrimination in home and visitor locker rooms.

The MLS measures came after meetings with New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, whose of-

fice reached similar agreements with the NFL and MLB.

He says workplace harassment and discrimination won't be tolerated in professional sports.

MLS spokesman Dan Cour-

temanche confirmed the agreement announced by Schneiderman on Thursday in Manhattan.

MLS has 600 players and 19 teams, including three in Canada. It recently began its 2014-15 season. □

2-game MLB series set to spur baseball Down Under

DENNIS PASSA
AP Sports Writer

Former Boston Red Sox coach Jon Deeble, who's been around Australian baseball for more than 30 years, figures next weekend's season-opening, two-game series between the Los Angeles Dodgers and Arizona Diamondbacks in Sydney will have a "massive impact" on the sport Down Under.

Certainly there's plenty of room for growth.

Baseball is not among the top 10 or 15 participation sports in Australia, well behind Australian Rules Football, rugby league, rugby union and cricket. Add to that list, among others, tennis, golf, basketball, the women's sport of netball and, according to government figures, recreational skiing.

Deeble manages the "Southern Thunder" Australian all-star team that will face the Dodgers on Thursday and the Diamondbacks the following day ahead of regular-season games on March 22-23 at the Sydney Cricket Ground. He says having "the best in the world" in Australia will translate into much-needed exposure.

"It will help the Australian Baseball League, kids who play the game, and that will convert hopefully into registrations," Deeble, who is a Pacific Rim scout for the Red Sox, told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. "It's also an opportunity for the players to see where they are really at, and something to ascribe to."

The Dodgers and Diamondbacks arrive in Sydney on separate charters Tuesday. They'll hold workouts at the cricket ground over the following two days before the pair of exhibition games against Team Australia. The opening series figures to feature Clayton Kershaw's fourth consecutive opening-day start for the Dodgers next Saturday, with Patrick Corbin on the mound for Arizona. The Dodgers' Hyun-Jin Ryu is slated to start the second game against Trevor Cahill. The series marks the first

regular-season games in Australia. Previous MLB season openers were held in Monterrey, Mexico (1999), San Juan, Puerto Rico (2001) and Tokyo (2000, '04, '08 and '12).

And while baseball may be not have the interest or participation level of other sports in Australia, it has longevity. Next weekend's games will mark the 100th anniversary of an exhibition game played by the Chicago White Sox and the New York Giants at the Sydney Cricket Ground, won 5-4 by the White Sox before 10,000 fans on Jan. 3, 1914.

Ben Foster, general manager of the six-team Australian Baseball League that has MLB financial backing, said he noticed a number of positive spinoffs after the series was announced in June.

"We saw an immediate increase in traffic on websites, interest in our players, and that translated into a 20 percent increase in our attendance in the 2013-14 season," Foster said from Arizona, where he was concluding an eight-day spring training visit to all 30 MLB teams.

Foster said the league's fourth season saw average attendance increase to 1,400 — "remember, we are going forward from nothing four years ago" — but more importantly is seeing more interest in the ABL from major league teams.

"Our first season, we had four or five clubs send players over," Foster said of the overseas contingent in the ABL. "This past season it was 13 clubs sending 34 players. So it's getting better every year."

The old ABL folded in 1999 amid mounting debt and was purchased by former Milwaukee Brewers catcher David Nilsson, an Australian. The competition created in the wake of the ABL, the International Baseball League of Australia, folded in 2002.

Brett Pickett, the chief executive of Baseball Australia, is taking a pragmatic approach to what the series might provide.



Arizona Diamondbacks starting pitcher Patrick Corbin pitches to a Kansas City Royals batter during the first inning of an exhibition spring training baseball game Wednesday, March 5, 2014, in Scottsdale, Ariz. Associated Press



Los Angeles Dodgers starting pitcher Clayton Kershaw walks through the dugout before pitching against the Oakland Athletics in a spring training baseball game Monday, March 3, 2014, in Phoenix.

"There's no question it's going to be huge, but I'm not suggesting for one minute that the series will help us overtake the AFL (Australian Football League) or National Rugby League," Pickett said. "These two games will not be a panacea for all things baseball. But it will provide a level of exposure for the sport we have never been able to achieve previously. If nothing else, it will put the sport into the minds of some of the sporting public, who, sadly, don't even know we play baseball in this country."

Pickett says there are about 60 Australian players under contract this season with major league organizations, and that there's a good chance four or five of them might be in the majors when the season starts

— Grant Balfour (Tampa Bay), Peter Moylan (Houston) and Ryan Rowland-Smith (Diamondbacks) among them.

Rowland-Smith is on the Team Australia roster, meaning the left-hander could pitch against the Dodgers in the Thursday night exhibition game, then appear against the Australians on the Friday night when he'll be on the Diamondbacks roster for the second preseason game.

Pickett defends the cost of ticket prices for the two regular-season games between the Dodgers and Diamondbacks — they start at 499 Australian dollars (\$450) for platinum seats and scale down to A\$69 (\$62) for seats in the outfield grandstand.

"The promoters have had

to fly out two baseball teams on chartered 747s, and build a baseball stadium to major league standards at the SCG," Pickett said.

The SCG field will have an 8-foot-high (2.4-meter-high) outfield fence and it'll be 328 feet (100 meters) down the foul lines and 400 to straightaway center field.

More than 35,000 square feet of turf will be temporarily removed to construct the clay infield, base paths and warning track. And it wasn't just any dirt — the soil-clay mixture used for the infield and pitcher's mound was imported in 14 shipping containers from the U.S. West Coast. The new expanded replay system for umpires won't be used. Pickett said with less than two weeks to go, there were only about 1,000 tickets left for the Saturday night game in the 38,500-seat stadium, and even fewer available for Sunday afternoon. The platinum and second-best gold seats were the first to sell out. "With the corporate marquee areas, they'll be more than 40,000 in the stadium for each game," Pickett said.

And based on comments from the U.S.-based caterer hired to provide food for fans and the players, they'll all enjoy traditional baseball fare. □

Dunleavy, Noah lead Bulls over Rockets 111-87

The Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Mike Dunleavy scored all of his 21 points in the second half and Joakim Noah flirted with another triple-double as the Chicago Bulls posted a 111-87 wire-to-wire victory over the Houston Rockets on Thursday. Noah finished with 13 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists. He was headed for his fourth triple-double of the season, but sat down with about three minutes left because of the lopsided score. Kirk Hinrich scored 19 points for Chicago, going 5 for 6 on 3-pointers, Carlos Booz-

er added 18 points, D.J. Augustin 13 and Jimmy Butler 11. The Bulls improved to 2-2 on their six-game home stand. The Rockets have dropped two straight. Jeremy Lin led Houston with 21 points, while Dwight Howard had 12 points and 10 rebounds. James Harden had eight points on 2-for-7 shooting. **THUNDER 131, LAKERS 102 OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)** — Russell Westbrook and Kevin Durant scored 29 points apiece as Oklahoma City avenged Sunday's surprising loss to Los Angeles. Westbrook shot poorly against Lakers on Sunday



Chicago Bulls guard Mike Dunleavy, left, and Houston Rockets guard James Harden watch the ball after Dunleavy passed it during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Chicago on Thursday, March 13, 2014.

Associated Press

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but made 9 of 17 shots and had nine assists in the re-match. Serge Ibaka added 15 points, 13 rebounds and a season-high seven blocks for the Thunder, who won their second straight and climbed within half a game of San Antonio for the top record in the NBA's Western Conference. Lakers guard Jodie Meeks, who scored a career-high 42 points on Sunday, was held to 19 on 6-for-15 shooting. Kent Bazemore scored 16 points and Pau Gasol added 14 for the Lakers. **HAWKS 102, BUCKS 97 ATLANTA (AP)** — Kyle Korver scored 12 of his 15 points in the fourth quarter to help Atlanta beat Milwaukee for its first back-to-back victo-

ries in nearly six weeks. Jeff Teague added 22 points, including eight in the final period when the struggling teams traded the lead several times. The Hawks went ahead for good when Korver's 3-pointer gave them a 90-89 edge with 2:15 left. Both teams entered the contest having lost 14 of their previous 16 games. The Hawks have plummeted to the No. 8 playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. They lead the surging Knicks, who have won five in a row, by 3½ games for the final playoff spot. Brandon Knight and Ersan Ilyasova scored 20 points each for Milwaukee, which has the worst record in the NBA at 13-52. □



Czech NHL veteran Petr Nedved retires



Czech Republic forward Petr Nedved takes a break during a training session at the Bolshoy Ice Dome at the 2014 Winter Olympics, Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2014, in Sochi, Russia.

Associated Press

PRAGUE (AP) — Veteran Czech center Petr Nedved has retired from ice hockey, a month after playing in the Sochi Olympics.

The 42-year-old Nedved made the announcement on Thursday after his White Tigers Liberec were knocked out of the Czech league playoffs.

"I can hardly find anything as beautiful as hockey in my life," an emotional Nedved said.

Nedved returned to the Olympics to play for the Czech Republic two decades after winning a silver medal in Lillehammer playing for Canada.

He emigrated from then-communist Czechoslovakia in 1989 to start his NHL career in 1990 with three seasons for the Vancouver Canucks. In 1995-96, his best season, he scored 45 goals and had 54 assists for the Pittsburgh Penguins before adding 10 goals and 10 assists in the playoffs.

In 982 NHL regular season games, Nedved scored 310 goals and added 407 assists.

He also played for the St. Louis Blues, New York Rangers, Edmonton Oilers, Phoenix Coyotes and Philadelphia Flyers.

He returned home when he retired from the NHL after the 2006-07 season. □

Marquez to face Alvarado at Forum on May 17

INGLEWOOD, California (AP) — Juan Manuel Marquez will return to the ring to face Mike Alvarado on May 17 at the newly renovated Forum.

Top Rank announced the 12-round bout Thursday.

The promotional company also says the winner will face the winner of Manny Pacquiao's April 12 rematch with Timothy Bradley for the WBO welterweight title.

The 40-year-old Marquez (55-7-1) hasn't fought since losing a split decision to Bradley last October. The four-division world champion fought 12 times at the Forum early in his career.

Alvarado (34-2) was stopped by Ruslan Provodnikov in his last bout, losing the WBO 140-pound title.

The Forum is getting back in the boxing business after its purchase and renovation by the company that owns Madison Square Garden. □

Schwartz scores twice as Blues beat Oilers 6-2



Edmonton Oilers goalie Ben Scrivens is slow to get up after giving up a goal to St. Louis Blues' Jaden Schwartz during the third period of an NHL hockey game, Thursday, March 13, 2014, in St. Louis. The Blues won 6-2.

Associated Press

The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Alex Pietrangelo started a four-goal third period and Jaden Schwartz scored twice to help the NHL-leading St. Louis Blues beat the Edmonton Oilers 6-2 on Thursday.

St. Louis has won six of seven overall and eight of nine against Edmonton.

The Oilers lost for the second time in five games.

Pietrangelo, Schwartz and T.J. Oshie scored in a 7:14 span at the outset of the third period to break a 2-2 tie, and Schwartz added his second goal of the period at 12:56.

Ryan Miller made 23 saves to improve to 5-0-1 since joining the Blues in a trade with Buffalo on Feb. 28. He's 7-0 against Edmonton. Vladimir Sobotka and Vladimir Tarasenko also scored for St. Louis, which outscored the Oilers 17-4 in winning all three games in the season series.

David Perron and Mark Fraser scored for Edmonton.

MAPLE LEAFS 3, KINGS 2

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Ma-

son Raymond broke a tie with a short-handed goal early in the third period as Toronto ended Los Angeles' eight-game winning streak.

James Reimer made 31 saves in the final two periods after replacing the injured Jonathan Bernier for the Leafs, who have won four of five. Captain Dion Phaneuf and Carl Gunnarsson also scored as Toronto beat both Southern California NHL clubs in a four-day span.

Marian Gaborik had an early goal and an assist in his home debut with the Kings, who fell just short of matching the longest winning streak in franchise history.

Anze Kopitar had a power-play goal and Jonathan Quick stopped 26 shots in his first loss since Feb. 3.

BRUINS 2, COYOTES 1

BOSTON (AP) — Tuukka Rask made 21 saves and Boston took the top spot in the NHL's Eastern Conference, beating Phoenix for its seventh consecutive victory.

Zdeno Chara and Jarome Iginla scored for Boston. The Bruins have 93 points, one more than Pittsburgh. Lauri Korpikoski scored for Phoenix with 12 minutes left in the game to spoil Rask's shutout.

Mike Smith made 18 saves for the Coyotes, who had won two straight.

SHARKS 4, BLUE JACKETS 3, SO

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Patrick Marleau scored twice and Joe Pavelski had the lone shootout goal in Jose Sharks' victory over Columbus.

After tying his career high of 66 points with an assist on Marleau's second goal, Pavelski roofed a backhand in the tiebreaker to give San Jose its fourth straight win.

Matt Nieto also scored and Logan Couture had two assists for the Sharks, who are 8-1-1 in their last 10 to move into a tie with Anaheim for the Pacific Division lead.

Ryan Johansen, R. J. Umberger and James Wisniewski scored for the Blue Jackets. □

Federer beats Anderson to reach Indian Wells semis

BETH HARRIS

AP Sports Writer

INDIAN WELLS, California

(AP) — Roger Federer beat Kevin Anderson 7-5, 6-1 in the quarterfinals of the BNP Paribas Open on Thursday, continuing his strong play at the tournament where he has yet to drop a set in four matches.

Anderson failed to break Federer's serve in the match, which lasted just over an hour. The South African had 21 unforced errors, while Federer hit 17 winners and won 79 percent of his first serve points. A four-time Indian Wells champion, Federer will play Ukraine's Alexandr Dolgoplov in the semifinals. Dolgoplov beat Milos Raonic 6-3, 6-4.

On the women's side, top-seeded Li Na beat Dominika Cibulkova 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 in a rematch of their Australian Open final. She next plays Flavia Pennetta, who defeated Sloane Stephens 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 in Thursday's other quarterfinal.

Federer earned the only break in the first set in the last game when Anderson netted a backhand volley. The Swiss star then broke Anderson twice to take a 4-0 lead in the second set. Anderson did his best to trade groundstrokes with

Federer while looking for an opening to rush the net, but the South African's repeated errors spoiled his game plan.

"It was big to win the (first) set and then to go on to break early in the second," Federer said. "Then double break was like a bonus. From then on I was home, basically. It was a really good match for me."

Dolgoplov's win assured the Ukrainian of rising to a projected No. 23 in next week's ATP Tour rankings. He has already made the biggest jump in the top 50 this year, moving up 26 spots to No. 31 before the tournament began.

"Obviously if you're ranked 20, 30, 40 you're a good enough player. To get in the top 10 you just need all those small things to be together and to be solid," he said. "It's really small differences from the players that are top 10 and top 50."

Dolgoplov improved to 6-2 against top-20 opponents this year, including his third-round win here over top-ranked Rafael Nadal. Li, who beat Cibulkova to win her second Grand Slam title in January, dropped her first set in four matches while improving to 15-1 this year. The Chinese star is seeded No. 1 for the first



Roger Federer, of Switzerland, reacts after winning the first set over Kevin Anderson, of South Africa, in the quarterfinals of the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament, Thursday, March 13, 2014, in Indian Wells, Calif.

time at a larger WTA event. "Not like before if I come here, maybe like No. 6 or No. 7 seed," she said. "But I think I am handling very well, so just continue."

Li rallied from a 5-1 deficit in the second set to close to 5-4 before Cibulkova called for her coach. After

they huddled, the Slovak player held to even the match at a set apiece. They traded breaks to open the third. Cibulkova survived a service game that went to deuce seven times and staved off four break points to level the score at 2-all.

Li swept the final three games, however, to seal the victory.

"I'm disappointed I didn't win because I had my chances," Cibulkova said. "My serve was just not there. Maybe I tried to go for too much. Her serve was much better than mine."

Pennetta emerged victorious after a wildly uneven match affected by swirling winds in the third set from a dust storm outside the Indian Wells Tennis Garden.

"The third was a disaster for both of us," Pennetta said. Stephens was the lone American woman left in the tournament, enjoying her best showing of the year so far. She appeared poised to move on after winning six straight games over the end of the second set and start of the third to take a 3-0 lead in the decider.

But the Italian, who at 32 is 12 years older than Stephens, won six of the final seven games, breaking the American at love in one of those games.

"I was trying to play in the middle of the court, but there was no one ball was in the middle, was always right or left," Pennetta said. No. 2 seed Agnieszka Radwanska and Simona Halep meet in the other women's semifinal Friday. □

Sagan wins Tirreno stage, Kwiatkowski takes lead

AREZZO, Italy (AP) — Peter Sagan showed off his uphill sprinting skills to win the third stage of the weeklong Tirreno-Adriatico race and Michal Kwiatkowski took the overall lead on Friday. Former world champion Philippe Gilbert appeared headed for victory until Sagan surged ahead of him and a handful of others about 25 meters (yards) before the line.

"I got excited when I saw this stage was in the race," Sagan said. "I wanted to do well and it went great." Sagan, a Slovak who rides for Cannondale, took more than 5 hours on the 212-kilometer (132-mile) leg from Cascina to the Tuscan town of Arezzo.

The stage concluded on an 11-kilometer (7-mile) circuit that featured a short uphill finish, with the last 900 meters at a 5 percent gradient.

It was Sagan's second victory of the season, having won a stage in the Tour of Oman last month, and the 57th of his career — many of them on stages similar to this one with short, uphill finishes.

Kwiatkowski, a Pole with Omega Pharma-Quick Step, finished second and Simon Clarke of Australia

was third, both with the same time as Sagan. Gilbert placed fourth.

Kwiatkowski, who won the Tour of Algarve last month, took a 10-second lead over Colombian teammate and Giro d'Italia runner-up Rigoberto Uran.

Stage 4 on Saturday is the race's toughest, a 244-kilometer (152-mile) leg from Indatore to Cittareale Selvarotonda that features several climbs, including a long, grueling uphill finish. Overall contenders Alberto Contador and Nairo Quintana will be expected to fare well.

The race ends on Tuesday



Slovakia's Peter Sagan, center, crosses the finish line to win the third stage of the Tirreno Adriatico cycling race from Cascina to Arezzo Italy, Friday, March 14, 2014.

Associated Press

with an individual time trial in San Benedetto del Tronto. Many riders, like Sagan, are using the race as a warmup for the Milan-San Remo classic on March 23.

"I hope so," Sagan said when asked if this win boosted his credentials for San Remo. "We've now entered a very important part of the season." □

Google redesigns search results on PCs

MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

Web surfing through the Internet's main gateway now looks slightly different on personal computers, thanks to a few cosmetic changes to Google's search engine this week.

The tweaks to the way Google's search results appear on desktop and laptop computers mirror a makeover on smartphones and tablets introduced a few months ago.

The new presentation increases font sizes and removes the underlines below the blue links of each

search result on PCs. Ads appearing along the top and the right-hand panel of the results page no longer are presented in boxes shaded in blue and yellow. The marketing pitches are now marked by small ad tags to distinguish them from the rest of the results.

Google Inc. rolled out the new design on PCs with little fanfare, even though it will be seen by almost everyone who searches for information on personal computers. That's because Google processes about two out of every three search requests made on PCs. The company's lead

search designer, Jon Wiley, announced the makeover Wednesday with a post on his Google Plus page.

The changes are meant to make it easier to scroll through Google's search results and present a "cleaner look," Wiley wrote in his post. Google's decision to transfer a design originally tailored for mobile devices to PCs also underscores the company's increasing emphasis on smartphones and tablets.

"Improving consistency in design across platforms makes it easier for people to use Google search across devices, and it

makes it easier for us to develop and ship improvements across the board," Wiley wrote.

Google, based in Mountain View, California, didn't immediately respond Thursday to requests for further comment about the new look. As with any redesign of a popular Internet service, some users were expressing their dismay and frustration with Google's new search design on PCs. There were also compliments mixed in with the complaints on Twitter's short-messaging service and the comments section below Wiley's Google Plus

post. The main gripes about the makeover seemed to center on the larger and different font and the lack of color on the results page. Google, though, typically faces much louder protests when its engineers complete a radical overhaul of the formula that determines rankings of search results. Those revisions can dramatically reduce the traffic of websites exiled to the back pages of the search results after a new formula is introduced.

In this case, Google is tinkering with the style of the search results, and not the substance. □

UK holds cyberwar game in Churchill's WW2 bunker

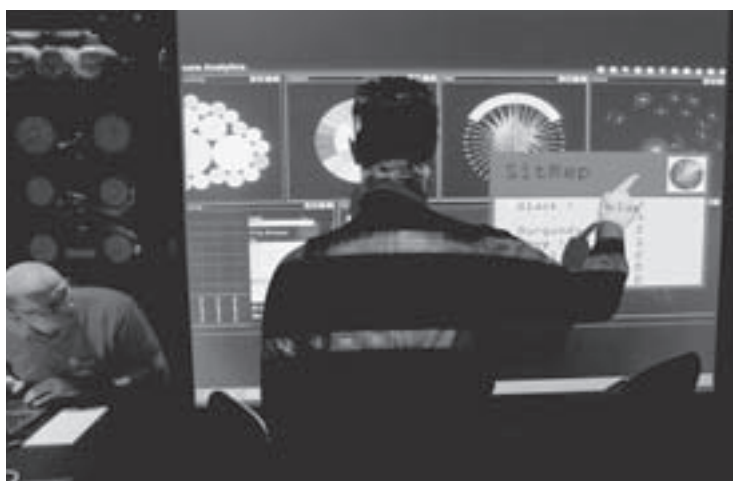
RAPHAEL SATTER

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) —

Under London's streets in Winston Churchill's World War II bunker, young techies are fighting a new kind of war. Bent over their computers in a steel-reinforced room, dozens of amateur cyber security experts spent Friday racing to understand why Britain's banking network suddenly seemed to have gone offline.

The exercise — it is just an exercise — came complete with sirens and mock newscasts. It's meant to recruit the next generation of tech talent, and is also meant to help highlight the



A representative of GCHQ points to a screen showing all the teams progress in completing the task during a mock cyberattack scenario with teams of amateur computer experts taking part and trying to fight this simulated attack in London, Friday, March, 14, 2014. GCHQ is the British Government's electronic intelligence service, they describe themselves as the technical partner to the intelligence and security services, MI6 and MI5.

Associated Press

threat many here see as inevitable: A major cyberattack on the nation's critical infrastructure.

Rob Partridge, a manager with telecommunications company BT who helped spearhead the competition, said: "Some of this is a little bit tongue-in-cheek." Still, "it's the kind of stuff that might happen."

In a private area in the back of the Churchill War Rooms, a complex of underground offices originally built to protect top officials from Nazi bombs, 42 contestants were clustered around seven tables amid the crimson glow of red diodes. Staff from BT, British

signals intelligence agency GCHQ and other companies paced the floor as the youngsters parsed code and tracked packets of data across an imaginary network. The exercise, formally known as the Cyber Security Challenge, is one of a series of Internet security initiatives that have recently won increased funding as the U.K. government has begun disbursing 860 million pounds (\$1.4 billion) into the field. The money has fed academic scholarships, business partnerships and a new research institution devoted to protecting British infrastructure from hackers. □

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Moody's lowers Royal Bank of Scotland ratings

CHAD BRAY

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LONDON - The credit rating agency Moody's Investors Service downgraded the Royal Bank of Scotland's long-term debt ratings this week.

The agency, a unit of Moody's Corp., placed RBS on review last month after the British lender said it would set aside nearly 3 billion pounds, or about \$5 billion, to cover potential litigation claims related to mortgage-backed securities and other products sold before the financial crisis.

Last month, the bank announced an 8.2 billion pound (\$13.6 billion) annual loss and said it could be three to five more years before it recovered. The lender is seeking to reshape itself into a customer-centric, British-focused bank after years of aggressive international ambitions.

On Thursday, Moody's cut the bank holding company's long-term credit rating a notch to Baa2, a medium-grade rating that is subject to moderate credit risk.

"Over a longer-term horizon, RBS' restructuring plan should be beneficial for creditors if executed according to plan," said Andrea Usai, a Moody's vice president and senior credit officer.

"However, the plan is large and complex, carrying significant execution risk in the short to medium term, happening at a time when the bank has limited financial flexibility to manage unforeseen events, which could arise either from the plan or from other sources, such as further litigation or conduct costs," Usai said. Bailed out in 2008, the bank is 81 percent owned by the British government.

Last month, Ross McEwan, the chief executive of RBS, said the lender needed to reshape itself as "a smaller, simpler and smarter bank." That will include shrinking the investment bank, selling assets and changing its culture. □

Oil prices edge up amid US data, China woes

PABLO GORONDI

Associated Press

The price of oil edged slightly higher on Friday but remained under \$100 a barrel as traders weighed whether an apparent pick-up in the U.S. economy could spur enough demand to offset a slowdown in China.

By early afternoon in Europe, benchmark U.S. crude for April delivery was up 44 cents to \$98.64 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. On Thursday, the Nymex contract rose 21 cents to close at \$98.20. Brent crude, used to set prices for international varieties of crude, was up 22 cents to \$107.14 on the ICE

Futures exchange in London.

Global markets, from stocks to commodities, have been roiled this week by signs of weakness in the Chinese economy and tensions in Ukraine.

China is one of the top consumers of energy, so an economic slowdown there could dial back demand for oil. At the same time, Russia is one of the top producers of oil worldwide, meaning that any Western sanctions against Moscow for its military incursion into the Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula could affect global supplies.

Still, recent good news about the U.S. economy helped underpin prices on

Friday. American retail sales bounced back in February after suffering a steep decline during a bitterly cold January. Shoppers spent more on autos, clothing and furniture. And the number of people seeking U.S. unemployment benefits dropped to the lowest level in three months.

Oil prices also benefited from the latest forecast from the International Energy Agency, which raised its estimate for global oil demand in 2014 to 92.7 million barrels a day, 95,000 barrels a day more than its projection made last month.

"Growth momentum is expected to benefit from a more robust global economic backdrop," the

Paris-based IEA said in its latest monthly oil market report. "The pace of growth will likely build through the year, as underlying macroeconomic conditions improve, but the standoff in Ukraine has increased downside risk to the forecast."

While demand in the U.S. was expected to continue to strengthen, the IEA agreed with views that China's oil demand would continue to decline, "as the government attempts to redirect the economy from heavy reliance on exports to domestic consumption, and, at the margin, environmental measures designed to curb air pollution." □

Stocks end lower ahead of critical Ukraine vote

ALEX VEIGA

AP Business Writer

Stock investors started the week worrying about China. They ended it waiting on Russia.

Investors spent much of Friday monitoring developments in the Ukraine's region of Crimea, where residents will vote Sunday on whether to join Russia. The U.S. and European Union have vowed to impose sanctions on Russia as early as Monday if Moscow moves to annex Crimea.

The uncertainty mostly stalled major stock indexes, which moved between small gains and losses through much of the day. Many investors took a cautious approach, turning to lower-risk stocks like utilities. All told, the Dow Jones industrial average slid 43.22 points, or 0.3 percent, to end at 16,065.67. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 5.21 points, or 0.3 percent, to close at 1,841.13. The Nasdaq composite dropped 15.02 points, or 0.4 percent, to finish at 4,245.40.

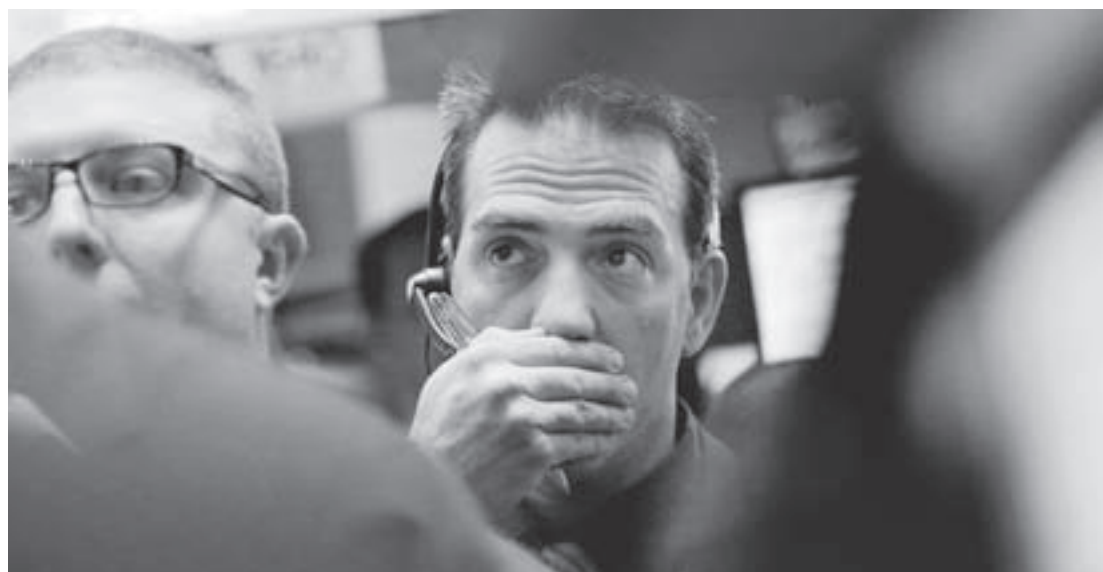
Even so, the S&P 500 index ended the week down less than 2 percent from a record high reached the previous Friday. And it remains just slightly in the red for the year.

"The market is still pretty

close to all-time highs. I think that speaks volumes," said Karyn Cavanaugh, a senior market strategist with ING U.S. Investment

lier, when the three major indexes lost more than 1 percent — the worst day for the market in six weeks. Thursday's decline was a

But if Crimea secedes, the U.S. and European Union plan to slap sanctions on Russian officials and businesses accused of escalat-



Trader Gregory Rowe, center, works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange Friday, March 14, 2014. The U.S. stock market slid to a slightly lower close Friday, a day after suffering its biggest decline in six weeks.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

Management. "The market hasn't been rattled severely by what's been going on this week, therefore I think next week I'd probably expect a similar reaction."

In government bond trading, the yield on the 10-year Treasury note was little changed from late Thursday at 2.65 percent.

Despite the Dow posting its fifth loss in five days, the market regained some of its footing from a day ear-

sharp contrast to the relatively quiet trading Monday through Wednesday. Discussions between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russia Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov Friday set the mood heading into the weekend. Despite six hours of talks, the two sides had "no common vision," for the crisis in Ukraine, Lavrov said. He told reporters that Russia has no plans to invade southeastern Ukraine.

ing the crisis and undermining Ukraine's new government.

The impact of sanctions on Russia would likely affect the energy sector and oil in particular, said Jonathan Corpina, senior managing partner at Median Equity Partners.

"Any sanctions, if they get to that level, are going to have a major effect in all areas," he said.

Russia is the world's eighth largest economy. □

Citigroup proxy underlines link of pay to performance

PETER EAVIS

© 2014 New York Times

The public is at something of a loss when it comes to judging whether big banks are following new rules that are meant to make them less risky.

But tracking banker compensation is not a bad way to start. And Citigroup's 2014 proxy report, released Wednesday, has some intriguing disclosures on pay that allow outsiders to partly weigh the degree to which a large institution is using compensation to hold its senior executives accountable.

The authorities used to take a hands-off stance toward Wall Street compensation. But after the financial crisis of 2008, regulators around the world decided that the banks they oversaw needed to remove incentives that fueled dangerous levels of short-term risk-taking. That meant doing away with big cash bonuses that rewarded bankers upfront, even though their businesses might blow up later. Instead, the regulators pressed banks to stagger the payment of bonuses over several years. The idea is that if a trade or deal goes bad in the future, the bank can "claw back" the deferred pay before employees who committed the missteps receive it.

In its proxy, Citigroup described a new set of conditions called the general clawback.

Under this, pay can be taken back if the company's compensation committee determines that an employee has "exercised materially imprudent judgment that caused harm to any of Citi's business operations." The provision also states that the employee's bosses might also get hit with a clawback if they failed to supervise properly. Citigroup apparently added the new provisions in response to shareholder pressure. New York City's office of the comptroller, which represents pension funds that hold Citigroup shares and has pushed many banks to toughen compensation agreements, formally asked the company in late 2012 to adopt a more far-reaching clawback that looks very much like the new one. In a 2013 response to the comptroller, the company said that it was adding new clawback provisions.

Citigroup's 2014 proxy contains detailed scorecards for a handful of its most senior executives, laying out the metrics used to assess their compensation. Some of them are financial, which drove 70 percent of the assessment of Michael L. Corbat, the bank's chief executive.

The other 30 percent are driven by nonfinancial metrics. One of them has to do with maintaining good relations with external stakeholders, which include regulators. In theory, then, Corbat could have some pay docked if relations with regulators deteriorated. The report card suggests that Corbat performed well on the nonfinancial goals.

The proxy also gives some specific details about the bank's attempts to tweak pay to penalize poor performance. Regulators rebuked a Citigroup affiliate called Banamex USA in 2012 and 2013 for lacking effective oversight of anti-money-laundering compliance. That failing was noted in the scorecard of Manuel Medina-Mora, the chief executive of Citigroup's consumer bank. His overall pay for 2013 was \$14 million, down from \$15.1 million a year earlier.

The decline for Medina-Mora was not large. But the scrutiny of Medina-Mora's pay may intensify now that other problems have surfaced at Banamex.

Citigroup said late last month that the unit had been a victim of a \$400 million fraud committed by a Mexican oil-services company. The proxy, however, sends mixed messages on how the fraud affected compensation. □



Andy Hines, Linh Nyugen loads live lobsters into a cargo truck for delivery to local cafes after leaving the Miami airport. The Labor Department released the Producer Price Index for February on Friday, March 14, 2014.

(AP Photo/J Pat Carter)

US producer prices dip 0.1% in February

C. S. RUGABER

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The prices U.S. companies receive for their goods and services fell slightly in February, the latest sign that inflation is tame.

The producer price index, which measures price changes before they reach the consumer, dropped 0.1 percent in February, the Labor Department said Friday. That's the first decline since November. A sharp fall in the price markups by wholesalers and retailers pushed down the index. Producer prices rose 0.9 percent from 12 months ago. That's the smallest 12-month increase since last May.

Wholesale food and energy prices increased, as did the cost of pharmaceuticals. Excluding the volatile categories of food, energy and retailer and wholesaler profit margins, core prices ticked up 0.1 percent.

The data also reflects the impact of aggressive dis-

counting by clothing and shoe stores. Their profit margins fell 9.3 percent, the steepest on record. Gas stations and grocery stores also reduced their markups.

"The overall takeaway ... is that inflation pressures remain quiescent for the time being," Joseph LaVorgna, an economist at Deutsch Bank, said in a note to clients.

The figures underscore that inflation remains largely in check. Businesses have struggled to raise prices because of historically high levels of unemployment and meager wage growth. That's made it harder for consumers to pay more. And with unemployment high, those with jobs are less able to demand higher pay.

The index was expanded in January to include services and construction, in addition to goods. That's made it a more comprehensive measure.

The government will release

its better-known consumer price index on Tuesday.

Low inflation has enabled the Federal Reserve to pursue extraordinary stimulus programs to try to boost economic growth. It has kept the short-term interest rate it controls at nearly zero for more than five years. It has also been purchasing bonds in an attempt to lower long-term interest rates to encourage more borrowing and spending.

The Fed is now trying to unwind some of that stimulus. It has cut its monthly bond purchases to \$65 billion, from \$75 billion in January and \$85 billion last year.

Fed policymakers will meet next week and are expected to announce another \$10 billion cut. Employers stepped up hiring last month, after harsh winter weather cut into job gains in December and January. Consumers also spent more at retailers in February after sharp drops in the previous two months. □

Vivendi in talks for possible SFR sale

PARIS (AP) — France's Vivendi has decided to start exclusive negotiations with media company Altice over the possible sale of its unit SFR, France's No. 2 mobile phone operator.

The move is a blow for Bouygues, a conglomerate that had made a com-

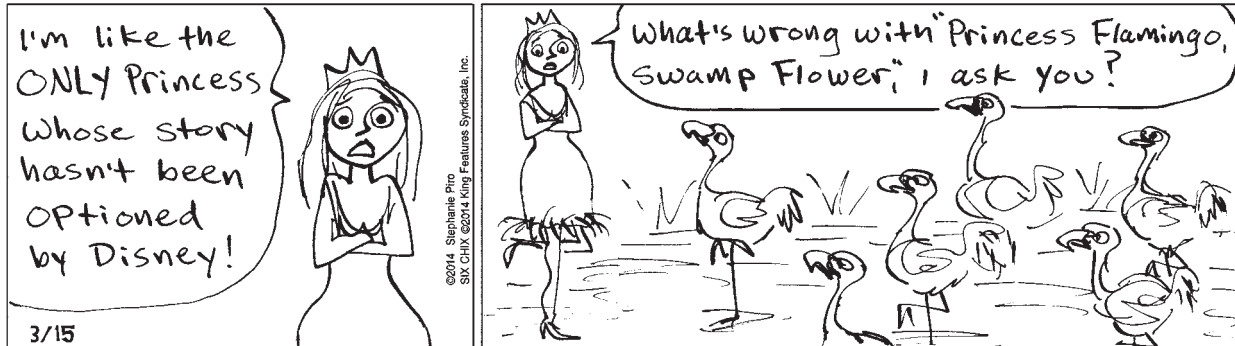
peting offer and raised it to 11.3 billion euros (\$15.8 billion) this week. Vivendi said in a statement Friday it will hold talks with Altice, owner of French cable operator Numericable, for three weeks and is keeping its options open if those talks fail. Vivendi's plans to

sell SFR have drawn interest across the European mobile industry, which is trying to consolidate its 150 major operators, compared to just four in the United States. Vivendi is trying to focus on its other holdings, the Universal Music Group and Canal+ pay television. □

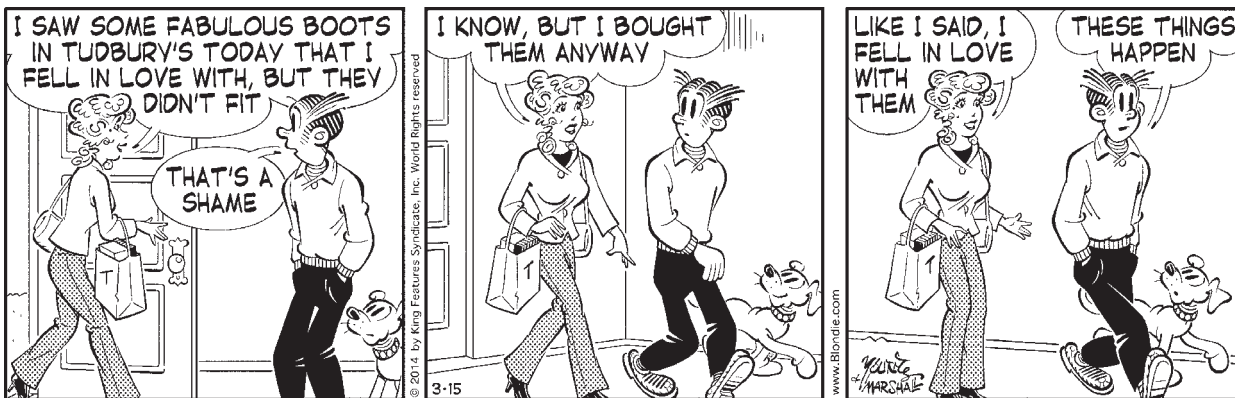
Mutts



6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

3			4	2				
			6	8	1			
					3	4		
	5					6	7	
6								2
2	4					8		
	6	1						
		5	1	7				
			8	2				4

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

3/15

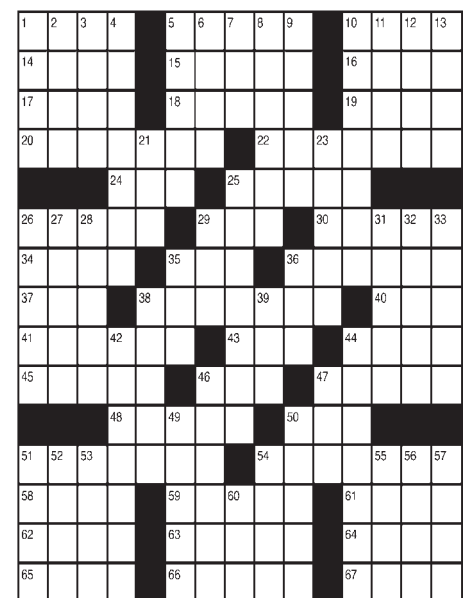
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

3	4	5	2	9	6	7	8	1
6	2	7	5	8	1	9	3	4
9	1	8	4	3	7	6	2	5
2	6	9	8	1	5	4	7	3
1	7	3	9	2	4	8	5	6
8	5	4	7	6	3	1	9	2
7	3	6	1	5	8	2	4	9
4	9	1	3	7	2	5	6	8
5	8	2	6	4	9	3	1	7

ACROSS

- 1 Hotels
- 5 Pile up
- 10 Hooting birds
- 14 Rich soil
- 15 ___depressive; bipolar
- 16 Banister
- 17 Reason to wed
- 18 Food selection told to a waiter
- 19 ___ up; quit
- 20 Horizon
- 22 Left empty, as a building
- 24 Cabin wall piece
- 25 Speed ___; fast driver
- 26 "Bye, Pierre!"
- 29 Fem. title
- 30 Largest internal human organ
- 34 Actor Jack ___
- 35 Key lime ___
- 36 Place; scene
- 37 Major leaguer
- 38 Roller ___; thrilling ride
- 40 Talk on and on
- 41 Get in the way of
- 43 Take to court
- 44 ___ as a button
- 45 Burros
- 46 Encountered
- 47 TV's "___ of Fortune"
- 48 Bravery
- 50 Actress Arthur
- 51 Baseball officials
- 54 Disfigured; badly damaged
- 58 Poet Teasdale
- 59 Played a role
- 61 Thick cord
- 62 Job opening
- 63 ___ time; in prison
- 64 Wading bird
- 65 "Ticket to ___"; Beatles hit
- 66 Stockholm resident
- 67 Least popular chicken piece



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

3/15/14

Friday's Puzzle Solved

DOWN

- 1 Misfortunes
- 2 Wall recess
- 3 Dark blue
- 4 Was stinky
- 5 Surrounded by
- 6 Colt's mother
- 7 Conjunction
- 8 Colanders
- 9 "Get lost!"
- 10 Like a health nut's food
- 11 Bide one's time
- 12 ___ in; occupy
- 13 Toboggan
- 21 Debtor's note
- 23 Green or gray
- 25 Bureau
- 26 Sorority letter
- 27 Day or Roberts
- 28 Actor Jeremy
- 29 Sinatra's third
- 31 Unclear
- 32 Make joyous
- 33 Nonconformist
- 35 ___ favor; please, in Peru
- 36 Bruce or Spike
- 38 Actor Romero

CEDAR	ADDS	OAHU
AWAKE	LUAU	FLAT
REMIT	ANNS	FELT
PREMIERE	SWERVE	
	BRIM	REENTER
ECHOED	MIXED	
ALE	DEBIT	DEALT
TARP	ROLES	DDAY
SWEAT	RESTS	ZIP
	ROPES	RECEDE
ECUADOR	DALE	
DANSON	POWERFUL	
INTO	DELL	CEASE
COIL	EVEL	TAKEN
TEES	REDS	SLEDS

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3/15/14

- 39 Egypt's boy king
- 42 Get off topic
- 44 Humiliation due to failure
- 46 Russia's capital
- 47 Scalp cyst
- 49 Goes first
- 50 Scout's award
- 51 Old nation led by Stalin: abbr.
- 52 African nation
- 53 Nudge
- 54 Repair
- 55 Part of the ear
- 56 Heroic poem
- 57 Writing table
- 60 Even score

Amsterdam canal house built with 3-D printer



A 3D printer constructs the building blocks for a canal house in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Thursday, March 13, 2014. Associated Press

TOBY STERLING
Associated Press
AMSTERDAM (AP)

Hundreds of years after wealthy merchants began building the tall, narrow brick houses that have come to define Amsterdam's skyline, Dutch architects are updating the process for the 21st century: fabricating pieces of a canal house out of plastic with a giant 3-D printer and slotting them together like oversized Lego blocks. Hedwig Heinsman of architect bureau Dus says the goal of the demonstration project launched this month is not so much to print a functioning house — in fact, parts of the house will likely be built and rebuilt several times over the course of three years as 3-D printing technology develops.

Rather, it is to discover and share the potential uses of 3-D printing in construction by creating new materials, trying out designs and testing building techniques to see what works.

"There's only one way to find out," she says. "By doing it."

She envisions a future in which personalized architecture may be custom-crafted on the spot, or perhaps selected from an online store for architectural designs, downloaded and tweaked.

At the core of the project is a 6-meter (20-foot)-tall printer dubbed the Kamermaker, or "room-builder."

It's a scaled-up version of the open-source home 3-D printer made by Ultimaker, popular with hobbyists.

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Scientists expect traces of ocean radiation soon

JEFF BARNARD
Associated Press

Scientists have crowd-sourced a network of volunteers taking water samples at beaches along the U.S. West Coast in hopes of capturing a detailed look at low levels of radiation drifting across the ocean since the 2011 tsunami that devastated a nuclear power plant in Japan.

With the risk to public health extremely low, the effort is more about perfecting computer models that will better predict chemical and radiation spills in the future than bracing for a threat, researchers say.

Federal agencies are not sampling at the beach. The state of Oregon is sampling, but looking for higher radiation levels closer to federal health standards, said state health physicist Daryl Leon. Washington stopped looking after early testing turned up nothing, said Washington Department of Health spokesman Donn Moyer.

The March 2011 tsunami off Japan flooded the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant, causing radiation-contaminated water to spill into the Pacific.

Airborne radiation was detected in milk and rainwater in the U.S. soon afterward. But things move much more slowly in the ocean.

"We know there's contaminated water coming out of there, even today," Ken Buesseler, a senior scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts, said in a video appealing for volunteers and contributions.

In fact, it is the biggest pulse of radioactive liquid dropped in the ocean ever, he said.

"What we don't really



This Aug. 20, 2013 file photo shows the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant at Okuma in Fukushima prefecture, northern Japan.

know is how fast and how much is being transported across the Pacific," he added. "Yes, the models tell us it will be safe. Yes, the levels we expect off the coast of the U.S. and Canada are expected to be low. But we need measurements, especially now as the plume begins to arrive along the West Coast."

In an email from Japan, Buesseler said he hopes the sampling will go on every two or three months for the next two to three years.

Two different models have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals predicting the spread of radioactive isotopes of

cesium and iodine from Fukushima. One, known as Rossi et al, shows the leading edge of the plume hitting the West Coast from southeast Alaska to Southern California by April. The other, known as Behrens et al, shows the plume hitting Southeast Alaska, British Columbia and Washington by March 2016.

The isotopes have been detected at very low levels at a Canadian sampling point far out to sea earlier than the models predicted, but not yet reported at the beach, said Kathryn A. Higley, head of the Department of Nuclear Engineering and Radiation Health

Physics at Oregon State University. The Rossi model predicts levels a little higher than the fallout from nuclear weapons testing in the 1960s. The Behrens model predicts lower levels like those seen in the ocean in the 1990s, after the radiation had decayed and dissipated.

The models predict levels of Cesium 137 between 30 and 2 Becquerels per cubic meter of seawater by the time the plume reaches the West Coast, Higley said. The federal drinking water health standard is 7,400 Becquerels per cubic meter, Leon said.

Becquerels are a measure

of radioactivity.

The crowdsourcing raised \$29,945 from 225 people, enough to establish about 30 sampling sites in Alaska, British Columbia, Washington and California, according to Woods Hole. The website so far has not reported any radiation.

Sara Gamble of Washington state, the mother of a young child, raised \$500 because she thinks it is important to know what is really going on. Woods Hole sent her a bucket, a funnel, a clipboard, a UPS shipping label, instructions and a big red plastic container for her sample.

She went to Ocean Shores, Washington, a couple of weeks ago, collected her sample and shipped it off. No results have come back yet. To do another sample, she will have to raise another \$500.

"I got lots of strange looks at the beach and the UPS Store, because it's labeled 'Center for Marine and Environmental Radioactivity,' and it's a big red bin," she said.

"But it's funny; nobody would ask me anything out on the beach. I was like, 'Aren't you curious? Don't you want to ask?'"

Taking the sample has allayed her initial fears, but she still thinks it is important to know "because it affects our ecosystems, kids love to play in the water at the beach, and I want to know what's there." □

Associated Press

Japanese lab investigating its stem cell research

TOKYO (AP) — A Japanese government-funded laboratory said Friday that it has found "inappropriate handling" of data in a widely heralded stem-cell research paper, but has yet

to discover anything that amounts to misconduct.

In an interim report released Friday, the RIKEN research institute said an investigative committee did not find any misconduct in two of the six parts of the paper it is scrutinizing.

RIKEN President Ryoji Noyori, a Nobel laureate in chemistry, said the institute is looking into "significant discrepancies" in the preparation of articles about the research published in January in the scientific journal Nature.

"It may become necessary

to demand the withdrawal of the articles," he told a packed news conference in Tokyo.

RIKEN and Nature are investigating allegations of duplicated images of DNA fragments and partial plagiarism.

Three authors of the paper have agreed to a retraction, said Masatoshi Takeichi, head of RIKEN's Center for Developmental Biology, but a final decision hinges on a consensus of all the authors and the journal itself.

Researchers in Boston and

Japan conducted the experiments.

The results were seen as a possible groundbreaking method for growing tissue to treat illnesses such as diabetes and Parkinson's disease using a simple lab procedure.

The institute stressed that the aim of the investigation is solely to determine whether there was any misconduct, and not the veracity of the research itself. Takeichi said verification of the results depends on their reproduction by independent researchers. □

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Obama's 'Funny or Die' skit over 15 million hits

DAVID BAUDER

AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP)—President Barack Obama's appearance on the "Between Two Ferns" satirical online talk show this week has reached 15 million views — almost at Justin Bieber levels. The website Funny or Die said Friday that Obama's interview with Zach Galifianakis, posted Tuesday, will likely beat Bieber's record of 17.8 million views for the show. The pop singer's appearance was posted in September. The president's appearance to persuade young people to sign up for health insurance is a key moment for the Internet, much like Franklin Roosevelt's fire-side chats were for radio and the Kennedy-Nixon debate for television, said Dick Glover, CEO of the comic website started by Will Ferrell.

"It truly validates that it is an incredibly valuable me-



This image from video released by Funny Or Die shows President Obama, left, with actor-comedian Zach Galifianakis during an appearance on "Between Two Ferns," the digital short with a laser focus on reaching people aged 18 to 34. Obama's appearance posted Tuesday, March 11, 2014, on the comic website Funny or Die, is at 15 million views by Friday. Associated Press

dium for the president," he said. For his part, Obama told Ryan Seacrest in an interview that he figured he'd reached his target audience when his daughter Malia was excited that he'd done the interview when he told her at the

dinner table. She's seen most of the "Between Two Ferns" posts, he said.

Galifianakis' act is to ask his guest hostile or inappropriate questions. But Obama said he seemed nervous at the White House taping.

"He was looking around at

all the Secret Service guys with guns and thinking, 'I wonder what happens if I cross the line?'" the president said. Obama will have a way to go to beat Funny or Die's record of 81 million views for a video posted in 2007, showing

Ferrell being harassed by a pint-sized "landlord." Now that Galifianakis has interviewed Obama, who's next on the "Between Two Ferns" wish list?

"(Russian President Vladimir) Putin is certainly up there," Glover said. □

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The Weather Channel reimagines morning

DAVID BAUDER

AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Sam Champion is trying to deliver more than a weather forecast.

The former "Good Morning America" weatherman, who debuts the three-hour "AMHQ" on The Weather Channel on Monday, says he wants to invent a new kind of morning show. (The show will air weekdays at 7 a.m. Eastern.) His plan is to appeal to the weather geek while not ignoring the rest of the world, with an agenda driven by social media.

"I don't know if we have the right answers yet," he said a few days before the premiere, "but we're working on it."

The Weather Channel has put its faith behind Champion, naming him the network's managing editor along with morning host. "AMHQ" will absorb some aspects of the current morning show, including



This May 21, 2012 file photo shows Sam Champion at the FiFi Fragrance Awards at Alice Tully Hall in New York. Associated Press

to drive his show's news agenda more than it does for traditional news programs.

The way people consume information has dramatically changed over the past decade and television hasn't fully responded, he said.

Champion won't forget the network he's working for. Each of the show's three hours will be led by a 15-minute discussion of the day's biggest weather stories.

"We will cover every weather story with live team reporting, with live images, the best pictures, the best experts and the best graphic forecasts," he said. "You will have a thorough analysis of every weather story on the board. It is not just a 30-second drive-by of our national weather."

Just removed from the bitter competition for viewers between the New York-based "Good Morning America" on ABC and NBC's "Today" show, Champion has an inside view of how they operate.

"The popular morning shows do everything the same way," he said. "If somebody puts in a social media box, someone else puts in a social media box. If someone does pop news at 8 o'clock, someone else does pop news at 8 o'clock. If someone does 'Deals & Steals' at 8:36, someone else does 'Steals & Deals' at 8:36."

For "AMHQ," "we didn't sit down and design a show that tries to be like the other shows," he said. "What we tried to do is design a show that realizes the audience is already partially informed when they turn the TV on. It's not their first connection to the world. We want to be fast-paced, we don't want to waste your time, but we want to tell you the things that you're probably going to want to know more about."

On St. Patrick's Day, with live remotes from celebration sites in New York and Chicago, Champion's vision will come to light. □

Shatner's Twitter exit a joke with pal Bergeron

LYNN ELBER

AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Tom Bergeron is leaving "America's Funniest Home Videos" at the end of next season, but William Shatner is not quitting Twitter.

The two became linked when Bergeron announced this week that he would step down as host of the show next year. That prompted Shatner to tweet that he was inspired by Bergeron to tweet no more. But that was only a shared joke with his pal Bergeron, according to Shatner's publicist, Putnam & Smith. The "Star Trek" actor, a prolific tweeter, has nearly 1.8 million followers. The proof Shatner is still tweeting is online. Among his messages Thursday was one calling attention to National Coconut Torte Day and National Potato Chip Day, both this week. "Cake and chips," Shatner



In this Sept. 23, 2012 file photo, TV personality Tom Bergeron, winner Outstanding Host For A Reality-Competition Program, poses backstage at the 64th Primetime Emmy Awards at the Nokia Theatre in Los Angeles. Associated Press

posted on Twitter.

Bergeron, however, is serious about leaving "America's Funniest Home Videos," spokeswoman Alejandra Cristina said.

"As 'Doctor Who' fans know, every so often a regeneration is a good thing," Bergeron said in

a statement. But he and some others at "Home Videos" are pitching a new series idea to ABC, Cristina said, adding that the proposal is in its early stages and details were unavailable. Bergeron also is host of ABC's "Dancing With the Stars." □

meteorologist Mike Bettes, with news anchor Anaridis Rodriguez and meteorologist Maria LaRosa as the other featured players.

Morning is prime time at The Weather Channel, which has its headquarters in Atlanta, when many of its fans check in to see what the day has to offer. "People are already flooding in the door, but they are leaving pretty quickly," said David Clark, network president. "This is about putting on a full show and getting them to stay."

That means going beyond the weather to talk a little about news, sports and pop culture. The sports coverage won't rival ESPN, for example, but it will be enough so people can feel socially competent when they go to work, Clark said.

With news, Champion wants to "forecast the day," or talk whenever possible about things coming up that will affect the day's biggest stories. He'd like social media — what stories people are talking about online —

Fear of Wages



PAUL KRUGMAN
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Four years ago, some of us watched with a mixture of incredulity and horror as elite discussion of economic policy went completely off the rails. Over the course of just a few months, influential people all over the Western world convinced themselves and each other that budget deficits were an existential threat, trumping any and all concern about mass unemployment. The result was a turn to fiscal austerity that deepened and prolonged the economic crisis, inflicting immense suffering.

And now it's happening again. Suddenly, it seems as if all the serious people are telling each other that despite high unemployment there's hardly any "slack" in labor markets - as evidenced by a supposed surge in wages - and that the Federal Reserve needs to start raising interest rates very soon to head off the danger of inflation.

To be fair, those making the case for monetary tightening are more thoughtful and less overtly political than the archons of austerity who drove the last wrong turn in policy. But the advice they're giving could be just as destructive.

OK, where is this coming from? The starting point for this turn in elite opinion is the assertion that wages, after stagnating for years, have started to rise rapidly. And it's true that one popular measure of wages has indeed picked up, with an especially large bump last month.

But that bump is probably a snow-related statistical illusion. As economists at Goldman Sachs have pointed out, average wages normally jump in bad weather - not because anyone's wages actually rise, but because the workers idled by snow and storms tend to be less well-paid than those who aren't affected.

Beyond that, we have multiple measures of wages, and only one of them is showing a notable uptick. It's far from clear that the alleged wage acceleration is even happening.

And what's wrong with rising wages, anyway? In the past, wage increases of around 4 percent a year - more than twice the current rate - have been consistent with low inflation. And there's a very good case for raising the Fed's inflation target, which would mean seeking faster wage growth, say

5 or 6 percent per year. Why? Because even the International Monetary Fund now warns against the dangers of "lowflation": Too low an inflation rate puts the economy at risk of Japanification, of getting caught in a trap of economic stagnation and intractable debt.

Overall, then, while it's possible to argue that we're running out of labor slack, it's also possible to argue the opposite, and either way the prudent thing would surely be to wait: Wait until there's solid evidence of rising wages, then wait some more until wage growth is at least back to precrisis levels and preferably higher.

Yet for some reason there's a growing drumbeat of demands that we not wait, that we get ready to raise interest rates right away or at least very soon. What's that about?

Part of the answer, I'd submit, is that for some people it's always 1979. That is, they're eternally vigilant against the danger of a runaway wage-price spiral, and somehow they haven't noticed that nothing like that has happened for decades. Maybe it's a generational thing. Maybe it's because a 1970s-style crisis fits their ideological preconceptions, but the phantom menace of stagflation still has an outsized influence on economic debate.

Then there's sado-monetarism: the sense, all too common among in banking circles, that inflicting pain is ipso facto good. There are some people and institutions - for example, the Basel-based Bank for International Settlements - that always want to see interest rates go up. Their rationale is ever-changing - it's commodity prices; no, it's financial stability; no, it's wages - but the recommended policy is always the same.

Finally, although the current monetary debate isn't as openly political as the previous fiscal debate, it's hard to escape the suspicion that class interests are playing a role. A fair number of commentators seem oddly upset by the notion of workers getting raises, especially while returns to bondholders remain low. It's almost as if they identify with the investor class and feel uncomfortable with anything that brings us close to full employment, and thereby gives workers more bargaining power.

Whatever the underlying motives, tightening the monetary screws anytime soon would be a very, very bad idea. We are slowly, painfully, emerging from the worst slump since the Great Depression. It wouldn't take much to abort the recovery, and, if that were to happen, we would almost certainly be Japanified, stuck in a trap that might last decades.

Is wage growth actually taking off? That's far from clear. But if it is, we should see rising wages as a development to cheer and promote, not a threat to be squashed with tight money. □



Discovering the Deepest Self



DAVID BROOKS
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There is, by now, a large literature on the chemistry and biology of love and sex. If you dive into that literature, you learn pretty quickly that our love lives are biased by all sorts of deep unconscious processes. When men become fathers, their testosterone levels drop, thus reducing their sex drive. There's some evidence that it's the smell of their own infants (but not other people's infants) that sets this off.

Women, meanwhile, have different tastes at different times in their cycles. During ovulation, according to some research, they prefer ruggedly handsome and risky men, while at other times they are more drawn to pleasant-looking, nice men.

When men look at pictures of naked women, their startle response to loud noises diminishes. It seems that the dopamine surge mutes the prefrontal cortex, and they become less alert to danger and risk.

This literature sometimes reduces the profound and transformational power of love into a series of mating strategies. But it also, like so much of the literature across psychology and the cognitive sciences these days, reinforces a specific view of human nature. We have two systems inside, one on top of the other.

Deep in the core of our being there are the unconscious natural processes built in by evolu-

tion. These deep unconscious processes propel us to procreate or strut or think in certain ways, often impulsively. Then, at the top, we have our conscious, rational processes. This top layer does its best to exercise some restraint and executive function.

This evolutionary description has become the primary way we understand ourselves. Deep down we are mammals with unconscious instincts and drives. Up top there's a relatively recent layer of rationality. Yet in conversation when we say someone is deep, that they have a deep mind or a deep heart, we don't mean that they are animalistic or impulsive. We mean the opposite. When we say that someone is a deep person, we mean they have achieved a quiet, dependable mind by being rooted in something spiritual and permanent.

A person of deep character has certain qualities: In the realm of intellect, she has permanent convictions about fundamental things; in the realm of emotions, she has a web of unconditional loves; in the realm of action, she has permanent commitments to transcendent projects that cannot be completed in a single lifetime.

There's great wisdom embedded in this conversational understanding of depth, and it should cause us to amend the System 1/System 2 image of human nature that we are getting from evolutionary biology. Specifically, it should cause us to make a sharp distinction between origins and depth.

We originate with certain biological predispositions. These can include erotic predispositions (we're aroused by people who send off fertility or status cues), or they can be cognitive (like loss aversion).

But depth, the core of our being, is something we cultivate over time. We form relationships that either turn the core piece of ourselves into something more stable and disciplined or something more fragmented

and disorderly. We begin with our natural biases but carve out depths according to the quality of the commitments we make. Our origins are natural; our depths are man-made - engraved by thought and action. This amendment seems worth making because the strictly evolutionary view of human nature sells humanity short. It leaves the impression that we are just slightly higher animals - thousands of years of evolutionary processes capped by a thin layer of rationality. It lops off entire regions of human possibility. In fact, while we are animals, we have much higher opportunities. While we start with and are influenced by evolutionary forces, people also have the chance to make themselves deep in a way not explicable in strictly evolutionary terms.

So much of what we call depth is built through freely chosen suffering. People make commitments - to a nation, faith, calling or loved ones - and endure the sacrifices those commitments demand. Often this depth is built by fighting against natural evolutionary predispositions.

So much of our own understanding of our depth occurs later in life, also amid suffering. The theologian Paul Tillich has a great essay in "Shaking the Foundations" in which he observes that during moments of suffering, people discover they are not what they appeared to be. The suffering scours away a floor inside themselves, exposing a deeper level, and then that floor gets scoured away and another deeper level is revealed. Finally, people get down to the core wounds and the core loves.

Babies are not deep. Old people can be, depending upon how they have chosen to lead their lives. Babies start out very natural. The people we admire are rooted in nature but have surpassed nature. Often they grew up in cultures that encouraged them to take a loftier view of their possibilities than we do today. □

Family Answers Calls to Basketball and Ministry

SETH BERKMAN

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NEW YORK - When Jim Crews coached at the University of Evansville, where he spent 17 years, in the early 1990s, he often picked up his son, Todd, at nearby Holy Rosary Catholic School.

One day, as Crews and his wife waited in a line of idling cars, the school principal told them that Todd, then in third grade, was destined to be a leader of people. Recounting the story Thursday while sitting with his son on the altar steps at Brooklyn Tabernacle Church, Jim Crews said that the principal just wasn't sure which direction he would lead them.

"In other words, he didn't know if he was going to go the good route or the bad route," Jim Crews said.

Today, Todd Crews, 30, is an associate pastor and leader of the young adult program at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, a nondenominational church housed in a former vaudeville theater. This week, Jim Crews attempted to win his second consecutive Atlantic 10 tournament title at nearby Barclays Center as coach of the St. Louis University men's basketball team. The top-seeded Billikens (26-6) fell short, though, losing to No. 9 St. Bonaventure, 71-68, on Friday afternoon.

In their careers, the Crewses have leaned on the similarities they encounter in their professions to guide their followers and each other in times of adversity. The family's connection to the church began over 20 years ago, when Jim Crews first met Brooklyn Tabernacle's senior pastor, Jim Cymbala, a former basketball player at Rhode Island. When Jim Crews began coaching at Army in 2002, he and his wife occasionally walked through the building's wooden doors and past the remodeled theater lobby to attend services in the main hall, which still holds 3,600 seats instead of pews.

Todd Crews was 19 when he first visited the church and said he was "over-

whelmed" by the experience, witnessing members waiting outside in line to enter. Before he graduated from Palm Beach Atlantic University, he met the former New Mexico coach Ritchie McKay after an Indiana Pacers game around the time of the 2006 Final Four in Indianapolis. McKay asked Todd about his plans

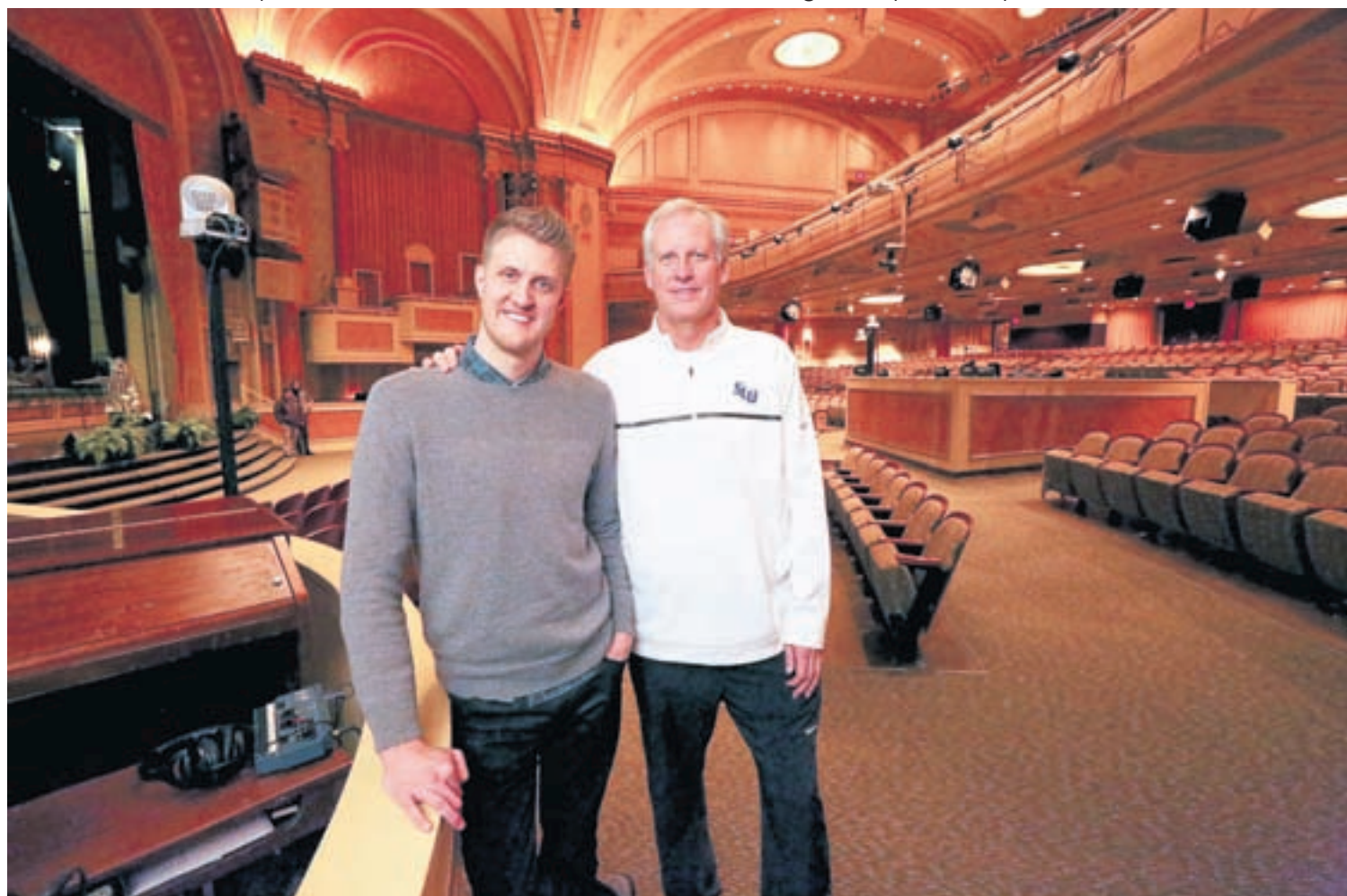
tioned that he wanted to be a pastor. But Jim Crews said he also felt very fortunate that his son was mentored in such an environment.

"When you serve other people, then you have, in my opinion, a life of significance, and there's a difference between significance and success,"

awards, including Atlantic 10 coach of the year, a feat he repeated this season. Jim Crews sometimes sounds like a pastor himself, often using analogies to get his point across. "If you go through the middle of that emotional hurricane, you'll come out the other side fine," he said. "That's one thing we try to really

about church and not even about people."

Todd Crews has also been able to convert a few of his members into Billikens fans. "People love to get excited and even jump on the bandwagon a bit," he said. "We'll take them." When the coach visits the church, he is often treated like a member of the staff.



Jim Crews, right, head coach of the St. Louis University mens basketball team, with his son, Todd, an associate pastor, at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, a non-denominational church in New York, March 13, 2014. The Crewses have leaned on the similarities they encounter in their professions to guide their followers and each other in times of adversity.

(Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times)

after graduation and gave him the phone number of Craig Holliday, a pastor at Brooklyn Tabernacle.

After graduation, Todd Crews drove from Florida to Brooklyn. When he arrived, he called the only local contact he had: Holliday. Todd Crews began working at the church seven years ago as a library assistant, but at the time, he said, he told Holliday that he would clean the bathrooms, if need be.

Today, he regularly meets with more than a thousand college-age members of the church to discuss the same kind of life-altering decisions he made when he first moved to New York. Jim Crews was surprised when he first learned of Todd's chosen career, as Todd had never men-

Crews said. "And when he's doing that, it makes me feel good. Warms my heart." In his two seasons as head coach at St. Louis, Jim Crews has often had to take on a multitude of roles, including those resembling the work of a pastor. In December 2012, when coach Rick Majerus, who was on leave from the team because of medical issues, died, Crews had to tell the players.

For some of them, Majerus' was the first death they had experienced firsthand, Crews said. Majerus had been a father figure to some players, a friend to others. As Crews tried to figure out how to replace Majerus in those roles, the team won a school-record 28 games. Crews won multiple coach of the year

express with our team. You can't avoid those feelings or emotions. Just go right through it."

Though they see each other only six or seven times a year, the Crewses often give each other advice. "There's a ton of overlap in coaching as well as pastoring," Todd Crews said.

Jim Crews will often ask his son about dealing with different personalities. Todd Crews has learned from his father how to focus on the lives of individuals. "It's about those kids becoming great fathers, great husbands, great employees one day," Todd Crews said. "And I think that translates to the church world, too, because even though it's church and it's supposed to be about that, sometimes it can become

On Thursday, Cymbala's daughter, Susan Pettrey, stopped by and hugged the coach.

The building is also where Jim Crews has met to talk to his son about some difficult times in his career. Before the start of the 2009 season, Army fired Jim Crews after seven seasons. According to news accounts, he had been accused of verbally abusing a player. In a statement at the time, Army's athletic director, Kevin Anderson, said, "There was a series of events that led me down the path to determine that I needed to make a change in leadership." He added that he was "very disappointed with some things that have come to my attention in recent days." □